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RUSSIAN DRAMA IN WARTIME

by

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW DANA

There was an old proverb which earlier Russians were fond of quoting: "When the guns begin to speak, the Muses must be silent." Today, however, Shostakovich, composing his Seventh Symphony in the midst of the heroic defence of Leningrad, declares: "Now music speaks together with the guns." The same is true in the Soviet theatres: "Drama speaks together with the guns." Drama in Russia today is a part of the national armament. It is a powerful force in the mobilization of the minds of men.

There is no blackout of the arts in the Soviet Union. All the arts of the theatre contribute to the strengthening of that civilian and military morale, which has gradually won the admiration of the other United Nations and become the despair of the fascist forces that hoped so quickly to conquer Russia. That is why—at a time when in other countries so many of the theatres are dark and so many of the plays are escapist—the sixty or seventy war plays produced in the Soviet Union in 1942 make up so important a contribution to the study of drama in wartime that they cannot be ignored.

On the eve of the German invasion of Russia in June 1942, although it was in the middle of the summer and many of the theatres were closed, no less than five plays of Shakespeare were saturating the remaining Moscow theatres with their beauty. Even in the new Red Army Theatre, shaped like a great five-pointed star, they were acting that delicate Shakespearian fantasy, *Midsummer Night's Dream*. At the very moment when that night was about to be turned into a Midsummer Nightmare by the Midsummer Madness of Hitler, the voice of Puck rang out ironically: "What fools these mortals be!" In that Red Army Theatre are inscribed the words of Voroshilov: "Every Red Army man must learn to understand and love the culture he is fighting to defend." Shakespeare, too, is a part of the culture they are defending.

On the day after the Nazi invasion, meetings were held of

theatre people all over the Soviet Union to lay plans for mobilizing their forces, too, for national defence. Arrangements were made for moving the theatres, like the factories, back from the advancing German army. Between each theatre company and each company of soldiers at the front was organized a sort of mutual inter-relationship or *"shevstvo."* Brigades of actors were sent from the theatres of drama to the theatres of war, troupes to the troops.

One of the first important theatre centers to be engulfed in the invasion was the city of Kiev. The director of the theatre there, the People's Artist, Gnat Yura, writes: "Today our stage is two lorries placed together with their sides let down." If all that is necessary for drama is a platform and a passion, the trucks supplied the platform, and the ardor to liberate their invaded land provided the passion. Once, when a performance was going on at the front, German shells began falling on this improvised platform. Immediately the Red Army Commander ordered the Russian gunners to silence the enemy's batteries, adding with a smile: "You must not let those Nazis interfere with drama."

When Leningrad was under siege, a somewhat similar story was told. Radlov writes that at his theatre there, he was producing Shakespeare's *Othello* and that he had to start the performance at five o'clock in the afternoon, so that they might finish by eight o'clock, before it was dark enough for the Nazi air raids to begin. This he called "beating Hitler to it." Once, however, just as Othello was about to strangle Desdemona, the performance was interrupted by a shrill air raid alarm. A cry went up from the audience. Was it fear that they might be bombed in the theatre? Not at all, says Radlov, it was indignation that these uncultured Nazis should have interrupted Shakespeare. Could they not have waited until Othello had finished with Desdemona? Such is the characteristic response of a Soviet audience—even in wartime.

In Moscow, in July, 1941, one month after the beginning of the Nazi attack, a German air raid completely destroyed the building of the Vakhtangov Theatre. There a play was being acted about Field Marshal Kutusov, who had saved Russia from the Napoleonic invasion of 1812. The Vakhtangov company, however, moved to the city of Omsk and the play went on there unmolested. If the German Army should penetrate as far as that, they were prepared to move the theatre still further East. We get a sense of the

indestructibility of the living theatre in the Soviet Union and of the slogan: "The play must go on!"

A little later the great Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow was twice damaged by German bombs—it was ironically a ceiling painting of the Triumph of the Muses that the Nazis destroyed. The company from the Bolshoi moved with the Soviet Government to the city of Kuibyshev on the other side of the Volga River. Similarly the Maly Theatre moved to Chelyabinsk; the Moscow Art Theatre to Seratov; the Kamerny Theatre to Irkutsk; the Moscow Soviet Theatre to Alma Ata; the Leningrad Pushkin Theatre to Novosibirsk; and the Leningrad Gorki Theatre to Kirov. Following a carefully prearranged plan, these theatres, like the factories, were transplanted to various points farther from German aggression. Incidentally, the inhabitants of these inner cities had a better opportunity than ever before to see the great performances of the Moscow and Leningrad theatres. Now, one by one, the theatres have returned to Moscow again.

Meanwhile the various theatre companies have been continuing to send groups of actors to the front. They were supposed to help inspire the soldiers, but often it was the Red Army that inspired the actors. Theatrical companies have also acted on the Island of Kronstadt, defending the harbor of Leningrad, and have performed for the Navy, using the tops of gun turrets or the bridges of battleships for platforms. Everywhere in the Soviet Union actors and actresses are working harder than they have ever worked before.

A great actress at the Moscow Art Theatre, Olga Knipper Chekhova, the widow of Chekhov, writes as follows: "We actors and actresses at the Moscow Art Theatre are organizing and despatching brigades of actors and actresses to act our plays before the Russian soldiers at the front. We are mobilizing the spirit of resistance and steadfastness of our people. We are hammering out the spiritual instrument of victory. We are filled with a great calm, for we know the unswerving and resolute spirit of the Russian people."

What are the plays that are being written and acted in these Soviet theatres during wartime?

Many of the Russian war plays are patriotic plays dealing with Russian heroes of the past. Stalin has said: "Let us be inspired in this war by the heroic images of our great ancestors." A series of

recent posters represent the Red Army fighting in the foreground and the earlier defenders of Russia fighting in the background. A long series of Soviet plays take up the various invasions of Russia during the last seven centuries and the various military leaders who have defended Russia: Alexander Nevski in the 13th Century; Minin and Pozharski and Ivan Susanin in the 17th Century; Peter the Great and Suvorov in the 18th Century; Kutuzov in the early 19th Century; and revolutionary Russian leaders, such as Chapaev, Shchors, and Parkhomenko, in the early 20th Century. Often these plays emphasize the guerrilla fighting of the Partisans and the "scorched earth policy" that anticipated the Russian methods so successfully used by the Russian people during this later and greater German invasion. They echo the words of Kutuzov: "Russia is a sponge which can absorb her enemies; but when the right time comes we shall squeeze the sponge and squeeze out our enemies." These plays about earlier Russian heroism give unity and continuity to the present national defence.

This national loyalty towards the heroes of their own race has been enlarged in the present war to an international loyalty which includes the other United Nations: China, America, and England. China, the largest of these nations and the longest invaded, has been the subject of many Soviet plays upholding the Chinese people. More American plays have been acted in the Soviet Union than Soviet plays in America. English plays, from Shakespeare through Sheridan to Shaw, have never ceased to be popular in Russia, even during the non-aggression pact with Germany.

During that same period just before the German invasion, the Soviet theatres, to the great indignation of the Nazis, continued to act anti-Nazi plays. In these they pointed out how in every essential respect—in the persecution of races, in the subjection of women, in the suppression of labor movements—the Nazi regime was diametrically opposed to that of the Soviet Union. Several pre-war plays warned the Russian people of the menace of Nazi invasion. Such were *If War Should Come Tomorrow, War in the West, The Struggle Between Two Worlds,* and a play by Vershinin and Ruderman called *Victory* which was later ingeniously adapted into a powerful post-war play by Janet and Philip Stevenson under the title *Counterattack* and acted in New York under the direction of Margaret Webster. Plays, such as *How Steel is Tempered* and

Restless Old Age, accustomed the Russian people to a philosophy of stoicism.

Many Soviet plays took up the cause of the Spanish Loyalists against Nazi and Fascist aggression in Spain. Plays, such as Brustein's *Day of the Living* and *King Spider,* glorified the struggle of the Czechoslovak people against Nazi occupation; and Slobodski's *Schweig Against Hitler* shows us the half humorous Czech hero of the last war, Brave Soldier Schweig, resisting the efforts of the Germans today to mobilize him into their armies against Russia. *The Slavic Wind* by Steinsky is similarly about the struggle of the Yugoslav Partisans against Hitler. *The Snows of Finland* by Fibikh and Kupryanov shows up the efforts of the Nazis to use Finland as a springboard for their attack on Leningrad.

In many of these plays the loyalty of the Russians towards their own land and towards their allies is reinforced by a sense of loyalty towards the working class throughout the world. It is this three-fold loyalty that makes these Soviet plays so strong a force in the morale of the Russian people. They make the Russian people realize that they are fighting a war of liberation—liberation of their own Russian Partisans who have been struggling behind the German lines, liberation of the other Slavic people who have been overrun by the invaders, and liberation of those races and workers everywhere who have been enslaved by the Nazi regime.

Only a little more than four months after the German invasion of Russia, one of the most popular of the Soviet playwrights, Afinogenov, was killed in a Nazi air raid over Moscow. Earlier in that same year, his play *Mashenka* had been produced in Moscow and has since then been acted in America by the Harvard Dramatic Club and the Idler Club of Radcliffe and an adaptation of it, under a new title by Miss Peggy Phillips, has been planned for performance in New York. At the time of Afinogenov's death, another play of his, *Distant Point,* was being acted in London; and the chief actor, in telling the audience of the author's death, quoted a passage from this play, in which the dying Red Army general cries: "We all have a 'distant point,' a world in which men shall live their lives in freedom and happiness. We all think of that, live for that, to the very last second of the last hour. And when death comes—why, we'll die alive!"

Afinogenov himself "died alive," died full of life. In the few

months since the beginning of the Nazi attack on Russia, he had written a play called *On the Eve*. The first scene was laid, as the name of the play implies, on the eve of the sudden German attack, in other words on the night of June 21, 1941. It is late at night in a beautiful garden overlooking a river, where a boat is passing, while across the river in the far distance on the horizon are to be seen the lights of Moscow. The Red Army general and his family and friends, who are gathered there, discuss the possibility of a Nazi invasion. The general realizes the impending menace, but the others cannot take it so seriously. They quote Lermontov, yes, and even Tennyson, and refer to Dickens, and discuss Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* and an actress quotes her speech as Olga from the end of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. This lovely midsummer's night is the shortest night of the whole year. It begins to grow light. "Tomorrow will be a lovely day," they say, "Tomorrow? Who knows what will happen tomorrow?" The dawn begins to appear. "Let us greet the dawn with a song," they say, and gently begin singing. The general's younger brother suddenly comes out of the house and draws his brother aside. "You are wanted immediately at headquarters!" The general leaves quietly, while the others continue singing softly and the sun rises.

Two days later. The sound of tanks. The devotion of all the family and their friends to national defence brings a sudden unity—"as if a clean wind had scattered the husks of personal affairs" and "as if everything had become bigger and simpler." The general's brother Andrei is an agronomist who has invented a new kind of grain, but he is willing to set fire to his grain field that it may not fall into the hands of the Nazis. He takes even the death of his wife with equal fortitude. Their old father, similarly, is ready to blow up the factory he has built, saying: "We did not begin this war—but we will finish it."

There are a number of other recent plays dealing with the siege of Moscow; such as *Moscow* by Tardov; *Moscow Nights* by Pogodin, the most successful of all contemporary Soviet playwrights; *The Girl from Moscow* and *Spring in Moscow,* both by Victor Gusev; *The Soul of Moscow* by Nikulin; and *The Sky of Moscow* and *The Battalion Goes West,* both by Grigori Mdivani.

Leningrad, in a more exposed position than Moscow and menaced not only by the Germans from the South but also by their

Finnish allies from the North, underwent an even more terrific siege than Moscow and the magnificently heroic defence of Leningrad has naturally been the subject of many Soviet war plays.

The House on the Hill by Kaverin is one of the best of these. As Afinogenov's *On the Eve* began in a country house outside of Moscow on the eve of the German attack, so Kaverin's *House on the Hill* begins in a country house on a hill outside of Leningrad on that same fateful midsummer night of 1941. In this newly built dacha, surrounded by pine woods and with a view of a river and hills in the distance, lives a teacher of history with his family; his hitherto rather ineffectual wife; his sixteen-year old son; and his young daughter who takes this occasion to announce the "secret" which the family have already guessed, that she is getting married to a young student who is present. In honor of this occasion, champagne is brought and toasts are drunk. An old friend of the family, an absent-minded doctor, proposes a toast to this wonderful moment—if it could only be made to last. The young brother takes a family photograph of the gathering, and they turn on the radio for music, only to hear a voice announcing the news—the German armies have invaded Russia.

In the second act, two months later, in August, 1941, the happy family in the house on the hill has broken up. The young student, to whom the daughter is engaged, has gone to join the Red Army. The father has given up his work as a teacher and has become a leader of the Partisans, carrying on guerrilla warfare behind the German lines. The mother and daughter have left for Leningrad. The young sixteen-year old boy alone remains to defend the house and while crying "Forward!" falls wounded by the invading Germans.

The next act shifts to the city of Leningrad, where the mother shows unsuspected qualities of courage in the midst of unspeakable horror, and the daughter finds her fiancé badly wounded.

The last act brings us back again to the house on the hill, very much shattered. The tide of battle has now withdrawn and the family are all re-united in their old home—all but the father, who is thought to have been among the Partisans who have been shot by the Germans. Finally, however, he enters safe and sound at the end of the play, just in time to wave goodbye and shout "Come back

with victory!" to the young student, now recovered, who is marching forward with the Red Army to drive back the Germans.

Another play, *Great Hopes,* written by this same Kaverin and based on real life as he saw it on the Leningrad front, deals with a battalion of young Leningrad students fighting heroically against the invaders. A play called *A Citizen of Leningrad,* written by Solovev, deals with the Soviet composer Shostakovich and the role he played in the defence of his native city. *One Night* by Schwartz also deals with Leningrad during that grim period of siege; and another play, written by the same dramatist for the Theatre of the Young Spectators, deals with the younger Leningrad generation that had been evacuated from the besieged city, but is devoting all its energies to the relief of its beloved Leningrad. *The Wide Rolling Sea,* a musical play for which the text has been written by Vishnevski, Azarov, and Kron, sings the praises of the gallant sailors of the Russian Baltic Fleet, who helped to rout out the Fascist fifth column that had been carrying on sabotage inside of Leningrad.

Our Correspondent by Levin and Metter deals with the heroic life of a war correspondent on the Leningrad front. *Immortal* by Arbuzov and Gladkov also deals with a war correspondent, but in this case an American correspondent, who is gradually won over to the cause of the Soviets by the heroism of his youthful Russian friends fighting a guerrilla warfare, wrecking German communication lines, and blowing up German ammunition dumps. "Immortal" was the nickname of the apparently deathless leader of these Partisans; and, when he is finally killed, his name "Immortal" is taken as the title of the book the American is writing on Russia, since it seems to him typical of the spirit that he has found there. Toward the end of the play, when they are surrounded by Nazi forces, the American seizes a machine gun and opens fire on his German assailants, crying: "Now America is in the war!"—a cry that arouses a storm of applause in the Soviet theatres where the play is acted.

The Smoke of the Fatherland written by the two Tur brothers and Sheinen, who have collaborated in a long series of effective plays, has a bitter irony and comedy mixed with its melodrama. A former Russian landlord, who had owned a house in Leningrad as well as a place in the country, has joined the German invaders in hopes of recapturing his ancestral estates. He carries, hanging

around his neck, a bag containing a handful of Russian soil from these estates given to him by his father; and he has sworn, when he returns to Russia, that he will swallow a pinch of it. But he finds that his country home has been turned into an agricultural college for the workers and the Russian soil has a bitter taste in his mouth. He hopes soon to be in the city, which he still calls "St. Petersburg," and he babbles of the Neva, the Nevski Prospect, and Pushkin's poem of *The Bronze Horseman,* and quotes the lines, which give the title to the play:

"Sweet and pleasant is the Smoke of the Fatherland."

Leningrad, however, offers a more stubborn resistance than he or the Germans had supposed. When the Russian peasants and Partisans have set fire to forests and fields, "the smoke of the fatherland" proves not to be so "sweet and pleasant" as he had anticipated.

In this play, the German officers are not stereotyped, but carefully differentiated. One older German colonel still admires Bismarck. A younger Nazi major, on the other hand, belittles him, saying contemptuously: "Bismarck had no Russian campaign." To which the older colonel, risking the wrath of the Gestapo, retorts: "In that, perhaps, Bismarck was wiser than our present leader."

The Nazi officers have brought with them a German cameraman, who has taken moving pictures of Hitler, to get him to make a film of the Russian peasants coming with "bread and salt" to welcome their new "liberators." This picture is to be taken for the sake of influencing "world opinion" which the Nazi major says cynically is created by "a dozen or so idiotic citizens in Stockholm and Geneva."

When they come to shoot the picture of this trumped up scene with the Russian peasants, they find that Partisans, who have mingled with the peasants, turn and fire upon the Nazi officers.

The Partisans in this play are likewise carefully differentiated. There is the vigorous leader, Kazatkin; and his wife, Antonina, who knows German and, acting as a servant to the Germans, tells their plans to her husband. There is an old peasant from the "Peaceful Labor Collective Farm" who realizes that this is no longer a time for "peaceful labor" and, joining the Partisans, drains all the gasoline out of seven German tank cars, as though he were milking as many cows. Finally there is the delightful scalawag and dare-devil, Zabudko, who has been put in jail for breaking two chairs when

he was drunk. When a German bomb has burst open the jail door, he reports for duty; and, putting all his crazy remarks into rhyme, steals back an accordion from the Germans, blows up a bridge and dives into the river, insults the Nazis outrageously and is finally stabbed to death by their bayonets.

In *Invasion,* written by Leonov, one of the finest of Soviet writers, we find ourselves in a small town that has been entirely engulfed by the invasion. An altruistic Russian doctor has stayed behind with his heroic wife, an "iron old lady," and their daughter, a school teacher, who helps her father look after the needs of the Partisans. When the leader of the Partisans, whom the Germans are hunting to death, is wounded, it is this daughter who rescues him and brings him to her father to be tended in hiding. In the doctor's family it is only his son, a weakling, socially useless, who wavers in his loyalty so that his mother says of him: "He is not one of us." Little by little, this son is rehabilitated. He is won over by the courage of the Partisans and saves the life of their wounded leader, by pretending to the Germans that he himself is the leader, and for this he is hanged.

Ruza Forest by Konstantin Finn, which has been adapted by Janet and Philip Stevenson under the name of *Secret Weapon,* deals with a band of Russian Partisans hiding in the Ruza forest, between Smolensk and Moscow, and surrounded by German armies. The Nazis in a nearby town, disappointed that the peasants have not revolted against the Russian Government as they hoped they would, pin their faith on the Russian "intellectuals" whom they call together in a meeting, trying to get them to cooperate with them in their invasion of the Soviet Union. At the meeting, however, they are able to gather only a few old men and women, most of whom are not intellectuals and none of whom want to help the Germans. One old Russian singer, when he is forced to sing against his will, sings the "Internationale" and is put to death. Like the doctor in Leonov's *Invasion,* a Russian woman, in charge of the local hospital, pretends to help the Germans; but when they find out that she is really working for the Russians and says that the Russians' "secret weapon" is their desire to live, they shoot her. The Germans also hope to use one, Petrenko, but he, like Ivan Susanin, at the risk of his life, leads the invaders into an ambush in the Ruza forest. The leader of the Partisans, who are lying in wait in the

forest, is so touched by Petrenko's heroism that he saves him at the sacrifice of his own life. Having trapped the Germans, the rest of the Partisans leave to join the Red Army.

In another play *Petr Krymov,* Konstantin Finn turns to pay tribute to the heroic work of the Russian soldiers of industry.

The Partisans, fighting a guerrilla warfare in the rear of the advancing German armies, have won the admiration of the world and they have come also to play a most important part in many of the Russian war plays. Peretz Markish has written a play on them for the Moscow Jewish Theatre. Krapiva and Kapler have both written plays called *The Partisans*—the latter about the women Partisans.

Since the Ukraine is the part of Russia where the Germans have penetrated deepest and engulfed the largest numbers of the civilian population, it is natural that many of the plays about the guerrilla fighters should be laid among the Ukrainians. One of the many German illusions about Russia was that the Ukrainians would stage a separatist revolt against the central government of Russia. On the contrary they found them offering a very stiff resistance. This is the theme of a number of plays by Ukrainian dramatists. The early stages of the invasion are recorded in Pervomaiski's *The Beginning of the Battle.* Another powerful Ukrainian dramatist, Korneishuk, has followed up the success of his earlier play, *On the Ukrainian Steppes,* with a sequel to it called *Partisans on the Ukrainian Steppes.* In this play the same characters that the audience had seen in the first play, reappear under the stress of the terrific attack of the German armies. The peasants resolve to leave nothing for the advancing Nazis. This "scorched earth" policy proves easier to carry out in the case of Collective Farms than it would have been with individual farms. As they join the guerrilla's fight, two young women are killed. Saddened but determined, the peasants cry: "Forward for our honor, for our fatherland, and for liberty!"

Korneichuk has also written a daring play called *The Front,* full of healthy self-criticism of the Red Army. The play has been acted in all the most important theatres, has been published in full in the newspaper *Pravda* during August, 1942, and has been widely discussed in both civilian and army circles. In the play, an older commander has a splendid record from the Russian Civil War and

has been four times decorated for courage; but he tends to rest on his past laurels and becomes narrow-minded, conservative and unwilling to learn more modern methods of warfare from younger men. Jealous of their success, he gives them unreasonable orders. In vain his brother and his son try to prod him into listening to the advice that comes from experience. In vain they tell him that his courage and honor are not enough, if he is incapable of learning new things. Over against this proud old general is shown a younger officer with more initiative, who understands modern technique and comes in closer touch with his soldiers. He even gives word that the officers under him shall not touch food until the soldiers have been fed. Finally, by orders from Moscow, it is this young commander who is put in command in place of the older general.

Other plays dealing with the Red Army include Virta's *My Friend the Colonel* and Voitekhov's *Welcome to Arms.* Then there are plays dealing with the special branches of the military service. David Begelson's *Lev Dovator* is about a Jewish cavalry general who has covered his name with glory. *The Winged Tribe* by Pervetsev and *D D Regiment* written by an ace aviator, Vodopyanov, and a writer, Laptef, deal with the exploits of the air forces in the enemy's rear. *Commanders at the Helm* and Matveev's *Native Shores* both deal with the heroic sailors of the Soviet Navy. Other plays pay tribute to civilian morale. Among these are *The Women* by Nikulin, showing the heroic role of Soviet women in wartime, and *The Sons* by Smirnov showing us a splendid picture of a Russian mother and her sons.

There remains to be discussed one play—*The Russian People*—which sums up all these different aspects of the military and civilian morale of the Russian people as seen in the microcosm of a cross section of a single invaded town. This play has been acted by a hundred different theatres in the Soviet Union and has been produced by the Theatre Guild in America in an English translation by Harris Moss with an "American acting version" by Clifford Odets. It is not a play by one of the older, experienced Russian dramatists and it was dictated in great haste, but it is based on actual experience at the front, which gives it a documentary value beyond all drama. The author is a young poet, Konstantin Simonov, whose poem, *Wait For Me and I'll Return,* has been printed in a million copies and set to music by more than eighteen different composers. He

has taken some of the characters that he had made popular in prize-winning play of 1941, *A Fellow from Our Town,* and Korneichuk did in his *Partisans on the Ukrainian Steppes,* reintroduced them in the midst of the present war; and much of the satisfaction that the Russians get from *The Russian People* is in seeing the well-loved characters reappear on the stage once more. Simonov, however, has widened the scope of his drama. As the titles of the two plays imply, he has passed from the story of a single individual, "a fellow from our town" to that of "the Russian people" as a whole. The courage with which these people meet death, the very menace of death intensifying their love of life, each one prepared to "die with a purpose," each visualizing the father in his own way—two birch trees by a stream or however it may be—each with some touch of the poet in him, going to his death with a song—"a song is good for courage"—all these things go to show the extraordinary temper of the Russian people in the face of the most terrific invasion that history has ever known.

THE CIRCLE

by

JOHN ANDERSON

So jealous is the New York Drama Critics' Circle of the individual opinion of its members that it makes no pretense of acting in concert—except in awarding its annual prize for the best play of the season. Even then it protects the dissenting opinion by making the conditions of voting as nearly unanimous as possible and by stipulating that the objectors must have their dissent published along with the controlling judgment.

Hence I am aware that there cannot be an accurate and representative history of the Circle without the collaboration of the other seventeen members. I cannot speak for them. The fact that I am currently president of the Circle forces me to disavow with particular emphasis any notion that what I may say herein has either the knowledge or approval of the other members. But since some sort of record of the Circle seems to be needed, since such a record

help to clarify the public impression of the group intentions and judgments, and since, finally, I am a charter member, and have not only taken part in most of the meetings, but have helped draw up the various rules of procedure I am willing to rush in (with a slight push) where seventeen wiser critics might sensibly decline to tread.

I am handicapped in this foolhardy enterprise not only by the seventeen sternly inquisitive glances I can feel over my shoulder, but by the further and somewhat peculiar circumstance that the Circle, though it has been in existence nearly eight years, has now virtually no records. It seems that Mr. Frank Case's Wayward Inn, the Algonquin, which has been the Circle's hospitable, if transient headquarters, was seized last fall by an autumnal urge for house-cleaning, and in one of its more wayward moments committed the history of the Critics' Circle to the bonfires without first committing it to memory.

While this unhappy accident permits your historian a certain welcome latitude against the thorny points of uncheckable facts, it also deprives him of much needed assistance. "When were the voting rules changed?" Alas! while this question may not have the momentous import of the Constitutional Convention it is reasonably pertinent.

I find that I have already made one mistake in this chronicle and it is one which most members would probably make. I said the Circle had been in existence nearly eight years, and so it has, as a prize-giving jury, but actually it was formed not in 1935, but in the Fall of 1931, after a luncheon in the Harvard Club whereat a group of us under the deceptively friendly stimulation of Sidney W. Carroll, then head of the London Critics' Circle, formed a New York Circle—vaguely, let it be said, with no strict intention of doing anything except going around officially in circles. There are I believe, no records of this organization, but as far as I know Mr. Burns Mantle was president, and there were no other officers.

What happened then to impel this loosely organized group to chirk up after five years of hibernation, take on new members, and a new responsibility, and offer to present, with monies paid out of individual pockets, a large silver plaque to the author of the best American play of the year?

Officially there was no direct answer to this question until the

first award was made to Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* on April 5, 1936. But the answer was implicit in the theatrical seasons of the eight or ten years before that, and especially in the history of the Pulitzer Prize awards.

For years there had been growing disrespect, not to say ridicule for the administration of the Pulitzer Award by Columbia University. Under Mr. Pulitzer's will the prize was to be given ". . . for the original American play performed in New York which shall best represent the educational value and power of the stage in raising the standard of good morals, good taste, and good manners."

This attitude toward the Pulitzer Prize was based not only on the plays honored, which often provided causes enough, but because it was a well-known fact that the Award Board could and did disregard the decision of the Advisory Board (usually made up of discriminating playgoers) and handed the prize to some play of its own whimsical or possibly expedient choosing.

There was a leakage of information on this point in the season of 1923-24 when the prize was given to Hatcher Hughes for *Hell Bent for Heaven.* The fact that Mr. Hughes, all innocent in the matter, was a member of the Columbia faculty, and that the Award Board ignored George Kelly's *The Show-Off,* which is a landmark in any theatrical record, caused a lifting of eyebrows, followed the next year by a lifting of nostrils when the Board passed by *What Price Glory?, The Firebrand,* and *Desire Under the Elms* to give its already fading guerdon to Sidney Howard for *They Knew What They Wanted.*

As if to make up for its neglect of *The Show-Off* the Award Board, in 1925-26 saluted the same author's lesser work *Craig's Wife* at the expense of *The Butter and Egg Man, The Wisdom Tooth,* and O'Neill's *The Great God Brown.* By the following year the Morningside game of eeny-meeny-miny-moe was really played out. In a decision which blandly ignored such still celebrated dramas as *Broadway* which was the chronicle of an era, *Saturday's Children, Chicago, The Road to Rome,* and *The Silver Cord* the Pulitzer Committee gave its ribbons and its $1,000 check to *In Abraham's Bosom.*

It was on this occasion, if I'm not mistaken, that someone asked Alexander Woollcott what the Pulitzer Prize was worth, and he replied with venomous accuracy, "Exactly one thousand dollars."

Whatever repute the prize had after that seemed to vanish completely with two succeeding decisions: *Alison's House* in 1930-31 and *The Old Maid* in 1934-35.

By its critical gyrations the Board found that it had strayed quite a distance from Mr. Pulitzer's intentions. It had twice given the prize not to original plays but to works based on novels, and the general confusion was, perhaps inadvertently, acknowledged in 1929 when the Advisory Board decided to eliminate from the Founder's conditions the words ". . . in raising the standard of good morals, good taste, and good manners." Withered in a cross fire of criticism the Board obviously was not going to defend any more territory than it had to.

Doubtless all this seething suspicion and bewilderment over previous awards came to a boil in the Spring of 1935 when in one of its most pixie moods the Award Board gave the prize to *The Old Maid,* which was not an original play, but one based by Zoe Akins on a story by Edith Wharton. In doing so it surpassed even its previous record for absurdity by disregarding the work of two new and important playwrights, Clifford Odets whose best play, *Awake and Sing,* appeared that season, and Lillian Hellman, then represented on Broadway by her first play, *The Children's Hour.* With what may better be described in the words of Peggy Wood's father as "one swell foop" the Board ignored, in that same decision, such worthy dramas as *Valley Forge,* and Robert Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest.*

Plainly something would have to be done about it, if the values of the theatre were to have any relation whatever to active critical standards. A good many people brooded seriously over the matter and when the critics straggled back to their work-benches the following September for a new season, the discussion was under way. In lobbies and on intermission sidewalks something was brewing. The first written record of the developments that I can find in my own somewhat destitute files is a note dated September 9, 1935, from Helen Deutsch as diplomatic intermediary. Long a devoted, intelligent, and energetic worker in the theatre, and co-author of a history of that cradle of the American drama, The Provincetown Playhouse, Miss Deutsch was on equal terms of enthusiasm and integrity with most of the first rate authors, producers, and critics. I say "was" because after several years of admirable but

gratuitous service as the Circle's actual secretary she departed for Hollywood.

"What do you think," she wrote, "of the idea of an annual award for the best play of the New York season to be bestowed not by a ladies' club or a committee of artistically underprivileged trustees, but by the New York dramatic critics? I have discussed the matter with the other metropolitan critics but you were out of town, and so there remains only your agreement to make the thing complete. The other critics are unanimous in their approval of the plan.

"There is no tie-up with anybody or any organization on this thing. The idea arose one evening when some playwrights were discussing the Pulitzer Prize.

"It would work this way: every season you would be asked to vote, giving your first, second, or third choices. That is all you would have to do. Such an award, at the disposal of the only group of qualified persons would add a certain excitement to the theatrical season; it would put the Pulitzer Prize in its place; it would amount to a formal summing of the season which we have never had, and, as Mr. Mantle said, it would be the 'last word in awards—the final, concluding, official judgment of the season'."

The Critics suddenly remembered that they already had a Circle that was doing nothing, and decided, with impressive promptness, that here was something for the Circle to do.

From this point on the history of the Circle suggests its dominant characteristics—devotion to the highest ideals of the theatre, and a scrupulous regard for the integrity of individual opinion. Every move the Circle made was an effort to transmit the greatest possible force of critical judgment in support of good drama, without sacrificing the smallest fraction of personal values. While it was recognized that group action was of prime importance it was also recognized that the separate integrities must be protected if the prize was to mean anything. The Circle's change in procedure from time to time reflects continuing efforts to reconcile these two considerations.

For it was never as easy as it looked. Almost immediately the following questions reared their ugly heads:

What do we mean by "best"?

Shall we give a prize for the best script, or shall we give prizes also for the best direction, the best individual performance, the best scenic design and the best production?

Shall the prize be a sizeable sum of money, or a medal?

At what time of the season shall the award be made?

Even before the first meeting of the moribund Circle was called so many controversies had broken out over the definition of the word "best" that for a time it appeared that the whole thing would have to be abandoned.

But on Sunday afternoon, September 22, 1935 a meeting was held at the Algonquin at which it was decided:

1. The prize shall be called the Drama Critics' Prize.

2. The award shall be announced on the first Monday after April 15, of each year.

3. The prize shall go to the best new play by an American playwright, produced in New York (the period to extend from April 15, to April 15).

4. The vote of the critics shall be unanimous, if possible, and arrived at in the following manner:

(a) A ballot for the first three choices. This will reduce the number of contenders to four or five.

(b) These plays will be discussed and a final choice selected.

(c) In case a unanimous decision is impossible the award shall be announced as a decision of a majority of critics, with the dissenters named, so that they may be free to discuss their points of view.

(d) In the event that there are more than three dissenters no prize shall be awarded.

The names of the active jurors were then listed with their publications, and stipulation made that if any member left the publication he represented on the jury of award, his successor became a member "after sanctioning by the remaining members."

At that time offers had been made to endow a cash prize of $1,500, and the Circle wisely sidestepped all alliances which might identify the award with private interests. It was further agreed that if the Circle made an award, its judges would refuse to act on any other prize committee. No entangling alliances.

Under this somewhat loose arrangement, and the astute presidency of Mr. Atkinson, the Circle on October 22 affirmed the ar-

rangement and confronted its first award problem the following Spring. After hours of discussion a weary majority, with only three dissenters, won the award for Maxwell Anderson's poetic tragedy *Winterset*. The three dissenters voted for Robert E. Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight*.

During the award ceremonies on April 5, broadcast over a nationwide network, George Jean Nathan publicly broached the reasons for the Circle's activity.

"There are, as you know," he said, "certain other awards to each year's plays. But for some time it has seemed to the Circle that they have lost all significance, and what is more, all probity. They have been so hamstrung by rules and regulations, by by-laws and bye-bye laws, that they have come to represent nothing. Whatever anyone may think of the awards made by the Drama Critics' Circle those awards will at least be forthright and unhedging. The *best* American play of the year; that is the Circle's one and only question. There are no further qualifications; there is no ritualistic hocus-pocus. At least you will know a body of drama critics' undismayed and uncorrupted decision, whether it meets with your own approval or whether it does not."

Before handing to Mr. Anderson a silver plaque, designed by Henry Varnum Poor and representing in high relief a scene from the John Street Theatre in 1790, Brooks Atkinson read a letter from Eugene O'Neill, thrice winner of the Pulitzer Prize, in which the foremost American dramatist said in part:

"It is a terrible, harrowing experience for a playwright to be forced to praise critics for anything. There is something morbid and abnormal about it, something destructive to the noble tradition of correct conduct for dramatists. Nevertheless, conscience drives me to reiterate that I think the Critics' Circle award a damned fine idea.

"Prizes in themselves are neither good nor bad. They have no meaning except that which derives from the recognized authority of the awarders of the prize as judges of true merit. The Critics' Circle possesses that recognized authority, and so I am sure that its awards will deservedly have a significant and growing effect in helping to shape public opinion and in directing the future course of our drama. It is my hope that these yearly awards will direct the attention of the public to the fact that our theatre is now adult

and fully capable of standing adult comparison with that of any country in the world today; that it is no longer purely a show-shop and an amusement racket, but has grown to be a place where Art may exist."

In accepting the award Mr. Anderson, also a Pulitzer Prize winner said:

"Except for the theatre critics of New York no body of men in the country is qualified by training, education and professional experience to render judgment on a season's plays. I am, I assure you seriously, much more interested in that aspect of the ceremony than the fact that the first award goes to *Winterset*.

Anybody with the requisite cash can offer a prize for excellence in the theatre, but in order to encourage excellence it is necessary to know it when it appears, and a knowledge of what is excellent is more difficult to obtain than cash. I have never been greatly impressed with the Pulitzer Prize for the best play of the year because the final authority for its presentation rests with a committee which is aware only dimly and at second hand of most of what occurs in the theatres of Broadway. It follows that in so far as the Pulitzer Prize has had any influence on our theatre it has been a confusing and misleading influence, an encouragement to mediocrity, a gift passed out to a lucky winner by authorities who possess in this field neither standards nor information. But neither ignorance nor lack of standards can be charged against the Critics' Circle. The critics know very definitely what they are for and why they are for it, and whatever their faults of judgment may be, they *earn* their knowledge of the plays offered during any year, by an undeviating attention to what can be seen and heard from the aisle seats of Manhattan playhouses, an attention which amounts on some occasions to sheer martyrdom. I have, in my time, contributed to that martyrdom, and learned by stinging comments in the next day's papers that the boys knew what they were about. I have had both praise and blame in stimulating quantities, and have learned—perhaps unequally—from both."

True to its guarantees to the minority opinion the Circle then invited Percy Hammond, as spokesman for the dissenters, to release upon the astonished kilocycles some of his most silken ridicule at the expense of the Circle's guest of honor, an assignment which Mr. Hammond performed with unforgettable urbanity. He said that the

three dissenters were death-heads at the feast; ". . . here, in that cold capacity, guests; expected though unwelcome, we are, however, polite killjoys and we disguise our ghastly grins with amicable and mendacious false-face." He proposed a mock toast to *Winterset,* " . . . not as the season's best play, but as the play that fourteen of our naive confreres here in their ingenuous wisdom, voted to be the best." "To our taste," he added, "it is spinach, smothered with rhetorics' rich gravies—but still spinach."

In the echoing laughter and general satisfaction of the whole thing the Critics' Circle had got off to a fine start. The prize had a resounding effect; both Broadway and the playgoers seemed to respect it. Three weeks later the Pulitzer Committee threw the dissenters into blushing embarrassment by giving its prize to *Idiot's Delight.* As one of them exclaimed quoting a line out of *Boy Meets Girl,* "For God's sake, stay off our side."

During the ensuing Summer there "was much throwing about of brains" and when the new season opened the Circle, prodded by its president, proceeded to solve some of its problems.

On October 8, 1936 Mr. Atkinson sent out an encyclical to the members discussing the situation:

"After last year's experience," he wrote, "I am convinced that the Critics' Circle needs a constitution and a permanent scheme of organization. We have been vague about several things that matter and too much of the business of the Circle has been left to the president's personal judgment. My feeling is that before we start taking in new members and electing new officers we ought to have a constitution that will clarify the purposes of the Circle and we ought to choose a nominating committee to consider who the new officers will be and why. If we discuss a constitution at our next meeting, choose a committee to write it and report back to a second meeting a fortnight afterwards, the Circle will be in a better position to begin its second year wisely."

Consequently on October 14 the Circle met, appointed a committee to draw up a constitution with instructions that it include the regulation that "all votes relating to membership and all amendments to the constitution be governed by a three-quarter vote." Efforts to create a nominating committee for officers were abandoned, as were also all proposals to limit the number of members.

The committee reported back to the Circle at another meeting

on December 4, and the constitution was ratified. The preamble states that the purpose of the Circle "is to provide a means by which an association of professional dramatic critics of New York may use their combined influence to promote the welfare of the American theatre, to encourage native talent through the award of an annual prize to the best play by an American author produced each season in New York, and to maintain the prestige and dignity of dramatic criticism."

"The membership," said Article Two, "shall be selected from the active drama critics of accredited New York newspapers and magazines."

For the protection of minority opinion Article Eight stipulated that "when the number of the whole membership is not divisible by four one additional vote shall be required above the last number divisible by four. (This clause shall be hereafter designated as Popeye.)"

The Popeye vote lived up to the most belligerent traditions of its name.

Conditions for the prize award were set down in Paragraph Four of the By-Laws as follows:

"The winner of the annual prize of the Circle shall be chosen by a three-quarter or Popeye vote of the whole membership. Voting shall be by secret ballot and continue until a choice is made or until such time as the Circle by a three-quarter or Popeye vote decides to adjourn."

With all rules established and no holds barred the Circle went into session for its second prize award on March 26, 1937. Fourteen votes were necessary to reach a decision, and after eleven ballots the prize went again to Maxwell Anderson, this time for *High Tor*. Three dissenters voted for *Johnny Johnson* by Paul Green, and one for *Daughters of Atreus* by Robert Turney. It was decided that in honor of the amenities, the rude dissenters should take no part in the award ceremonies as broadcast, but that their names and the plays they voted for be stated.

At the beginning of its third season, the Circle made a few minor changes in its procedure, defined the season as extending from September 1 to April 1 of the following year, and created an honorary citation (no prize) for the best foreign play.

Under these rules the Circle met April 18, 1938 and after four

ballots agreed, by a vote of 12 to 4, to award its prize to John Steinbeck for *Of Mice and Men.* Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* was runner-up. The foreign award went to Paul Vincent Carroll for *Shadow and Substance.*

In this deceptively peaceful state, the Circle entered, in September 1938 and with George Jean Nathan as president, the stormiest year of its existence for in the following Spring it ran into irreconcilable differences of opinion. Unyielding partisans of four plays went through the strenuous controversy of ten ballots, and failed to make an award. The four plays in the order of voting strength were Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes,* Robert E. Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois,* Clifford Odets' *Rocket to the Moon* and William Saroyan's first play to reach Broadway production, *My Heart's in the Highlands.*

During the broadcast programme honoring the prizeless four Mr. Atkinson remarked that the situation meant money in the critics' pockets, since they had no silver plaque to buy, ". . . but it is also grief in our hearts." "We all feel," he added, "that there ought to be a critics' prize every year."

With this general feeling in mind the Circle met on October 9, 1939 and decided to change the machinery a little in the direction of making agreement easier without jeopardizing individual opinion. Accordingly an amendment was drawn providing that "if no decision is reached after a fifth ballot the Circle may, upon a vote of three-fourths of the membership, suspend the rule of the three-quarter or Popeye vote and the prize may be awarded by a simple majority vote."

This still made it possible for a determined minority to block an award for, if dissenting critics felt strongly about the play in question, they could refuse to suspend the rules.

The new arrangement proved satisfactory when, on May 3, 1940, the Circle, under the presidency of Burns Mantle, reached a deadlock through five ballots, voted to suspend the Popeye vote, and by a simple majority gave its award to Mr. Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life.* Four members held out for *There Shall Be No Night* by Robert E. Sherwood, two for *Key Largo* by Maxwell Anderson, and one, as a contemptuous gesture against majority compromises, for *The Man Who Came to Dinner.*

Thereafter the Circle found it easy to work up a critical lather over the vexatious question of whether there should be a choice among plays of small merit, simply because there is bound to be a best even in a bad season, or whether, as John Mason Brown put it, there is any point whatever in choosing the freshest from a box of bad eggs. To its credit, be it said, the Circle has leaned toward the stricter view. At the end of an anemic and war-torn season in 1942 it declined to make even a majority award.

It would be too early at best, and certainly inopportune in these confused times, to attempt any real assessment of the Circle's efforts or any guess at their permanent value. Plainly its standards can be no higher than the standards of a majority of its members.

It may be said that except in the case of *You Can't Take It With You* the Pulitzer Awards since the Circle's inception have gone to plays which were at least considered by some members of the Circle. In one instance, *The Time of Your Life,* the Pulitzer Committee has followed the decision of the Circle, and what is, I dare say, the most relevant of all, it refrained from making an award in 1942 after the Circle refused to make one, though there were certainly plays around up to previous Pulitzer standards.

In other ways the Circle has made its influence felt in the theatre. Although it was requested to abstain from reviewing the work of the Federal Theatre projects on the theory that the Government productions were to be considered as relief, not art, the critics diligently attended the W.P.A. shows, and Mrs. Hallie Flannagan handsomely acknowledged the value of this criticism in her admirable report on that venture.

The Circle has also been vigilant in such vital matters as censorship, and has twice taken an active part in trying to maintain the theatre's freedom of expression. Its group action has undoubtedly offset unfounded ideas of critical irresponsibility. By proclaiming its standards it has given large and emphatic definition to the highest aims of criticism. It has been honest with itself, with its individual members, and with the theatre, including most importantly, the theatre public. It has set up a critical model already copied in other fields—notably the films. Its work has just begun.

WITHIN THESE WALLS

by

CHARLES COBURN

This Theatre is the Oldest in Active
Use in the United States.
Built by the Eminent Architect Jay,
Opened December 4, 1818, with a Comedy,
"Soldier's Daughter"
and a Farce
"Raising the Wind"
Within These Walls Have Played
the Greatest Dramatic and Operatic
Stars of the World.
Erected by Bonaventure Chapter,
Daughters of the American
Revolution, 1929.

The above inscription on a tablet affixed to the front wall of the Savannah Theatre in the city of Savannah, Georgia, actually the second oldest theatre still in use in this country,[1] betokens the stirring and significant past, the rich overlay of associations, that mark a house which is lovingly inhabited by my earliest memories and which is as truly a part of my life as was my parental roof-tree in the same city of Savannah.

Through the years structural changes have been made. In 1904 the old theatre was wrecked by fire in which a valuable and comprehensive collection of pictures, programs and other mementos were destroyed. But the original walls stood and the theatre was rebuilt as it stands today. Although in recent years it has been a picture theatre, outwardly bearing little resemblance to the creation of William Jay, the English architect, nevertheless "Within These Walls Have Played the Greatest Dramatic and Operatic Stars of the World," as the Daughters of the American Revolution have pronounced it. And with proper allowances for futurity, as well as for the changeful past it may be said that on December 4, 1943, the Savannah Theatre will have existed for 125 years almost continuously in the service of Beauty.

At the age of seventeen, in the early '90's, I was made the

[1] The Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia was opened in 1809.

manager of this important theatre, a post once held by Joseph Jefferson at the middle of the century. Previously, I had served it as program boy at thirteen, then successively as usher, door tender or ticket taker, and treasurer. Thus I came into the theatre at a time when the actor-manager system still flourished in vigor and independence and when to a considerable extent the playhouses even in important centres—and such was Savannah—were individual enterprises under local ownership and control.

My connection with the Savannah Theatre, first in subordinate capacities and then for two years as manager, altogether about six years, extended over a part of the significant period in which a major change took place in the business of legitimate stage entertainment. In this transition predominance by the actor-manager passed into dictatorship by the "Syndicate" through the organizing of playhouse chains, central control of booking, consolidation of producers and the adoption of mass production and selling and other methods of industry. Owing to economic forces, the eventual trend of management was to place emphasis on the selling of art rather than the creation of art, and upon the success of real estate rather than the welfare of the art of acting.

Two different kinds of theatre thus came into the experience of the local house managers in the early '90's. My own incumbency as manager began in 1895 when the American Theatrical Exchange, having a circuit of playhouses principally in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, decided to take over the Savannah Theatre as a door for their circuit. Negotiations having been completed, I was promoted from the box office and installed as manager by Messrs. Greenwald and Weis.

The purpose of this article is to give some insight into what went on, in and about a playhouse of the type of the Savannah Theatre during the time I was there.

It was indeed a distinguished playhouse supported by a people who fostered a love of the theatre. Within its walls successive generations of Savannahans had seen such stars as Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth. It catered to all tastes. Melodrama, minstrels, extravaganza, burlesque and variety, each found response, each reflecting the average mentality of its audience. In smaller cities one theatre housed the various types of shows which

in metropolitan centres would each have been found in the special theatre of its class.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of the actor-manager system was the fixed confidence of the audience in the star. Each star and traveling attraction built up a following and became an institution in various parts of the country. Existing confidence being the basis of the audience, there would have been no point in trying to establish a run in New York or anywhere else. To have advertised "the original New York cast" would have been meaningless. The star of those days felt that three months would exhaust the average of audience intelligence required for his work in any one place. He also felt that the remainder was just as important—more important because there was more of it. There was the same average of theatre taste and intelligence in Dallas, Savannah or Cleveland as in New York. The confidence of audiences in those cities was fixed upon the star—were it Nat Goodwin, Stuart Robson or Mrs. Fiske—and upon nothing else.

Thus the booking of tours under the system of star and traveling attraction was fairly simple. It was done while traveling. Since the playhouse was locally owned and managed and the attraction was owned and controlled by the star, these two were the only ones concerned in an agreement and generally they agreed very quickly, in no longer time than was required for each to examine his memoranda of available dates for the next season. The date having been fixed and the financial terms agreed upon, the transaction was noted by each party, and this constituted the booking of the star for that house for the coming year. Often the title of the play would not be known. Very rarely, and then for exceptional reasons, was there an exchange of written contracts. That each party would in due time carry out the considerable detail connected with playing the attraction was taken for granted and never questioned. A business-like star would have a personal agent in New York or Chicago to whom he would transmit booking data for reference in connection with booking inquiries.

In the off-season of summertime the local manager, who exercised great care in selecting and lining up the desired attractions, journeyed to New York and there made the rounds of actor-managers, agents, producing managers and others, to learn what new plays were contemplated and what stars would be available for the

next season. At these sources he would complete his booking schedule. Publication of bookings in the local newspapers was eagerly received by theatre patrons, for the play dates would be an essential part of the community's social calendar.

Business transactions through the theatre were very considerable in the course of a year and the manager stood in a special relationship of friendliness with the railroads, hotels, banks, newspapers and the various local facilities that might be required by touring theatrical attractions.

At that time there was no Interstate Commerce Commission and the railroads carried whom they pleased. In the line of producing business, a railroad agent's discretion was seldom questioned. The theatre manager traveled on passes without violation of law or ethics. He would be supplied with passes and the only obligations on his part would be an exchange of courtesies and complete neutrality as between business competitors. It was thus possible for the manager to send a luckless actor or a stranded company back to New York or to get them entrained, "traveling on baggage," to the next play date, where perhaps the company would have a good engagement and send back money to square the hotel bill and transportation. If the attraction were suitable for the purpose, a manager might resort to selling a benefit for the relief of a grounded company.

Such incidents have fostered the principle of fraternity in the theatrical profession. Sympathy, generosity and helpful response to the distress of one's fellows has always been part of the tradition of the theatre. There was no thought of reward or of bread cast upon the waters. Just such incidents happened more than once in the Savannah Theatre. To one of them, which I was concerned with as manager, I owe my opportunity of becoming an actor. As a dramatic turning point, it appears to me to deserve description hereafter in these reminiscences.

The Savannah Theatre was of standard seating capacity with three floors, orchestra, balcony and gallery. Sight lines and acoustics were worked out to favor the audience without sacrifice of aesthetic considerations in the structure and decoration of the auditorium, including an elaborately beautiful gas chandelier. Box stage sets had not become prevalent. The stage floor was raked and grooves were used overhead; scenically the plays were presented

with set uprights, flats and wings, of which the house could provide an ample and well-conditioned assortment from Reception Room to Rocky Pass.

Previous to the day of the "Syndicate" the theatre in a sense was economically staffed, that is to say, most of the employees, while regarded as regularly attached to the playhouse, were paid by the performance. A carpenter, who was the head man back stage, and a janitor, both regularly employed, were stationed at the theatre and paid weekly salaries. But from the manager down to the program boy all others made their living at some calling other than the theatre, which was either an avocation or a devotion or something that filled out their lives.

In the stage crew we had a gas man. He was a handyman back stage but his regular job was with the gas company. Our electrician worked with the electric light company. Grips and flymen worked at some occupation which gave them leeway for the job with the stage crew, satisfactory arrangements being made in all cases between the man and his employer. The bill poster, paid by the sheet for the paper he put out, also served as a stage hand and was paid by the performance.

The orchestra, consisting generally of seven men, the leader and six players, was paid by the performance. The conductor was generally a music teacher. The others usually were professional musicians, but sometimes one or more were men in other callings who possessed talent and satisfied an interest in music by playing in an orchestra. All were good musicians. The box office man, known as "ticket agent," head usher and two assistants, and two door tenders or ticket takers also worked by the performance.

Reserved seat tickets for all performances were for sale in a downtown drugstore usually at a $1.50 top. Before the performance the ticket sale would be transferred to the theatre box office. Ushers would receive a list of the reserved seats sold and represented by coupon tickets held by the purchasers. Then they would go through the orchestra floor and turn up these seats to indicate that they were reserved. The remainder of the orchestra floor would then go into the general admission sale at a dollar. The purchaser of a "hard" or unreserved ticket at a dollar was entitled to any orchestra seat that was not turned up. This practice was changed

in 1895 when all seats were reserved and all tickets were coupon tickets.

Playing terms were rather liberal toward the attractions, which shared pro rata with the theatre on receipts and agreed expenses. Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry received ninety per cent of the gross. Nat Goodwin generally got eighty per cent. First class productions as a rule got seventy-five or eighty per cent. Others of lesser calibre did not get more than fifty per cent.

Scales of prices were varied, starting with the repertory shows at ten, twenty and thirty cents. The majority of good shows played at fifty cents, seventy-five cents and a dollar. In exceptional cases the top was boosted to $1.25, $1.50 and $2.00. Irving and Terry played to a $5.00 top.

After 1895, when the theatre went under the rules of big business and the "Syndicate" with large chains of playhouses was beginning to control the stars, taking them under its banner either with a preferential booking or in actual partnership, the tightening processes wrought many changes.

Traveling attractions carried more scenery, increasing production overhead and the stagehand bills for handling. Houses improved their physical properties, revamped their stages, reorganized their economic structure, paid more weekly salaries, but furnished less cooperation unless paid for by the traveling attraction which was the source of income. The "Syndicate" dictated playing terms and other conditions. It was at that time that the theatre became a business primarily and an art secondarily and the local management of a "Syndicate" theatre became a "full time" job—under instructions from the New York Office.

Among the attractions that came while I was employed in the Savannah Theatre were Nat Goodwin in *An American Citizen* and later, with lovely Maxine Elliott, in *When We Were Twenty-one;* William H. Crane in *The Senator;* Stuart Robson in *The Henrietta,* and Robson and Crane together as the two Dromios in *The Comedy of Errors;* Sir Henry Irving in *The Bells* with Ellen Terry playing *Nance Oldfield* as a Curtain Raiser; Alexander Salvini in repertory; William Gillette in *Secret Service;* DeWolf Hopper in *El Capitan;* John Drew, Mrs. Fiske, Richard Mansfield, Sothern and Marlowe, Warde and James and as many more in a single season.

Despite the fascinations of management, I was hoping to be an actor. Management had brought me closer to the thing I loved. It had placed me in immediate contact and special relationships with many of our foremost actors, for all actors toured; it must be remembered that the profit was on "the road," not in New York, which was just another town. But as soon as I realized how much professional preparation a successful artist required, I became seriously perturbed about tarrying longer under the pleasant spell and in the prestige of my position as manager of the Savannah Theatre.

At nineteen I was quite sure of my readiness for stage apprenticeship. I resigned as manager, and full of independence and enthusiasm I went to New York to look for a job behind the footlights. I expected to start as a walk-on. At least I knew the actor must begin at the bottom, but I was unprepared for the rebuffs that are met with even at the bottom.

A year and a half passed during which a determined siege of Broadway brought this aspirant to the stage a wide experience of assorted breadwinning in the fields of theatre ushering, department store parcel shipping, administrative duty on public works such as flood control of the Mississippi River and railroad building in Wisconsin, and, on the spectacular side, that of professional bicycle riding. But I was not conspicuously nearer even the bottom of the professional ladder of acting.

I went back to Savannah. There was nothing else to do, for it was the surest and most promising locality for the bicycle racing meet which I planned to put on in order to raise ammunition with which to return to the siege of the Broadway job.

Back in my old home town I immediately paid a visit to the theatre. To my astonishment a telegram had crowded in ahead of me addressed to "Charles Coburn, Manager Savannah Theatre." It was dated in Iowa and was from the once-stranded manager of a company I had helped with a benefit in Savannah. Assuming that I was still the manager in Savannah, he offered me the job of advance agent and press representative for his show. Why he thought I would take it I don't know. I have always thought he was desperate. But so was I, and I wired my acceptance immediately, for here was an opportunity to learn more about the show business. I received my transportation and within a week was the advance man of the Lyman Twins, touring the Middle West out of Chicago.

Returning with them to Chicago at the close of the season, I persuaded my friends in the company to introduce me to their actors-agents and I was taken to an office upstairs on Dearborn Street.

A manager was organizing a *Quo Vadis* company to tour the Middle West, starting from Chicago. He looked me over.

"You will play Ursus," he said.

And Charles Coburn was on the stage, thanks to the Old Savannah Theatre.

THE EVOLUTION OF BAROQUE THEATRE DESIGN IN ITALY

by

CHARLES NIEMEYER

The early decades of the Seventeenth Century saw the rise of a new dramatic and musical spectacle—the *melodramma* or opera. Developing in Florence in the latter years of the preceding century, this *genre* rapidly penetrated into every part of Italy, all but driving the legitimate drama from the boards, and, at the same time, seriously modifying the old court ballets and tournaments. Suddenly, the gigantic ducal hippodromes, which usually accommodated five thousand or more spectators, were doomed. Whereas they had primarily served to house spectacles basically visual in appeal, the new art, which blended vocal and instrumental music, recitative, ballet, and other elements of the courtly extravaganzas, required the finest acoustics to be fully enjoyed. Opera enthusiasts at once demanded a new type of theatre. As early as 1600, Alessandro Guidotti, in a preface to De' Cavalieri's opera, *Rappresentatione di Anima et di Corpo,* wrote:

> The instruments should be well played, and more or less in number according to the place, or rather the theatre or hall to be provided. This should not accommodate more than a thousand spectators at most, who should be comfortably seated for their greater silence and satisfaction. If it is performed in halls which are too large the words cannot be heard unless

the voices are forced; and if the words are not audible, so much music becomes boring.[1]

Aleotti, twelve years before building the ducal theatre at Parma, had already worked on this problem of a new theatre form, when designing an opera-house in 1606 for the Accademia degl' Intrepidi at Ferrara.[2] Comparing the plans for this structure with those of the typical court theatre one notes certain striking innovations; foremost, a vast reduction of scale. The entire opera-house at Ferrara was less than half the size of the auditorium alone at Parma. The general rectangular plan is yet in evidence; but the auditorium area is so compressed that the structure is divided almost equally into stage and house. The former is fully raked and separated from the latter by a permanent proscenium archway, placed approximately in the center of the building.

Particularly in the auditorium design are found several efforts at experimentation. Although the floor area bears the common U-shaped arrangement of steps for the spectators, these do not encircle the hall in the conventional manner, but, instead, are ranged in tiers running parallel to the stage front. Thus, the spectators were more definitely oriented toward the stage. The actual seating capacity of the steps, however, was very slight because of the much smaller and more intimate auditorium. To compensate for this, Aleotti raised three superimposed galleries or balconies at the rear and on the sides of the house. Each bore a balustrade, regularly spaced columns,[3] and an architrave, the uppermost being topped with statuary. Within each balcony giant steps, serving as seats, were elevated on two or three levels in a complex geometric pattern, resembling neatly stacked packing crates. Thus, in his effort to increase the capacity of the new and smaller auditorium, Aleotti appears to have pointed the way toward the later box-system.

As yet, theatres were not public playhouses, catering to and admitting the great masses of the populace. Frequently, townspeople were admitted to the most undesirable seats to witness the magnificent court spectacles; but, basically, all theatres were designed for and operated by the nobility and the esthetes of the academies. The truly popular theatre, the *commedia dell' arte,* remained home-

[1] The entire preface is reprinted by Solerti, Angelo, *Le Origini del Melodramma.* Torino, 1903, 1-39.

[2] See plans rep'd. Rapp, Franz. "Ein Theater-Bauplan des Giovanni Battista Aleotti," *Neues Archiv für Theatergeschichte,* (1930) II, 79-125.

[3] Doric on the first level; Ionic, on the second; Corinthian, on the third.

less, roaming the streets, setting up scaffolds either in public squares or in old, dilapidated buildings which had been abandoned.[1]

It appears that Venice was the first Italian city to erect a great number of theatres which could truly be termed "public." In the early years of the Seventeenth Century several noble families provided playhouses for the occupancy of professional *commedia* troupes during the winter season. Nearly all of these were soon given to the public performance of opera after its popularization at the San Cassiano in 1637.[2] By 1655 there were eight such theatres; and by the end of the century at least two more were built, to say nothing of the innumerable private opera-houses.

Doubtless, in the earliest of these: the San Cassiano, the SS. Giovanni e Paolo, and the San Salvatore, all erected in the early decades of the century and subsequently remodeled,[3] architects wrestled with the problem of creating the modern public theatre. But, unfortunately, almost no evidence, iconographic or otherwise, exists to indicate their designs. Roubo *fils*, however, in describing the San Cassiano, which after several reconstructions had opened as the first public opera-house in 1637, observed that it completely resembled the court theatre at Milan, except in its stage accommodations for scenery and machines.[4]

Inasmuch as plans of this latter theatre have been preserved by Dumont[5] and Patte,[6] some clue to the early design of the Venetian opera-houses is offered. The Milan theatre, although erected in 1717, was more typically a seventeenth-century structure, doubtlessly reproducing closely the earlier court theatre which had burned on the same site in 1708.[7] In fact, both Roubo *fils* and Milizia note that it was peculiarly out of line with contemporary design.

This structure presented a long, rectangular plan, 180 feet deep by 84 feet wide. At the front of the building, 21 feet were allotted to an entrance foyer; behind this stretched a cavernous auditorium 90 feet in depth, a proscenium archway, and a stage 69 feet deep.

[1] Croce, Benedetto. *I teatri di Napoli dal rinascimento alla fine del secolo decimottavo.* Bari, 1926, 39 ff. and Monaldi, Gino marchese. *I teatri di Roma negli ultimi tre secoli.* Napoli, 1928, 7.

[2] Galvani, N. *I teatri musicali de Venezia nel sec. XVII.* Venezia, 1878, 10.

[3] For a detailed history of the Venetian theatres of this period see Galvani, *Ibid.*

[4] Roubo *fils*, André Jacob. *Traité de la construction des théâtres et des machines théâtrales.* Paris, 1777, 33.

[5] *Parallel de plans des plus belles salles de spectacles d'Italie et de France. . .* Paris (c.1777), Yale Drama Library.

[6] Patte, Pierre, *Essai sur l'architecture théâtrale.* Paris, 1782.

[7] Cambiasi, Pompeo, *La Scala*: 1778-1906. Milano, 1906, xiij. . .

Apparently, in the second and third decades of the Seventeenth Century, Aleotti's crude balcony system with its levels of steps had been further developed into superimposed tiers of separate compartments which encompassed the auditorium fully on three sides: the modern box-system. The Milan theatre, thus patterned after these early houses, was built with five tiers of thirty-five boxes each and provided with the necessary rear corridors, stairways, and private wardrobes opposite each box. The loges at the rear of the auditorium were arranged in a very flat curve, while those on the sides, instead of running parallel to the walls of the building, flared inward toward the central axis as they receded from the stage. Thus, the interior width of the house was 48 feet at the proscenium and 42 feet at the rear. Such a conscious achievement of design opened the old U-plan to improve sight lines from the back loges.

Each box was approximately six feet square and was equipped with shutters which closed to allow privacy for gambling and conversation during the performance, a characteristic typical of the baroque Italian opera-houses. The dividing partitions between the boxes were judiciously slanted toward the center of the stage to prevent visual obstruction. Beyond a slightly projecting fore-stage and a permanent orchestra pit, this theatre offers but one additional feature of note—the ducal box, located on the second level at the rear of the auditorium.

Before the theatres were opened extensively to the masses so that they might truly be considered as "public" playhouses, the duke or prince and his court had usually been accommodated on a specially constructed dais, erected in the center of the hall at the rear. From this point the perspective settings were seen to the greatest advantage; and the artists inevitably planned the entire scenic display with this vantage point in mind.[1] Often no special dais was raised for the court. Since all the spectators were peers, it was fitting for the most noble to sit in the best places, the center section of the rear steps; while on either side, they were surrounded by their noble friends. But as the general public began to gain entrance to the court playhouses, sumptuous and ornate loges were provided for the dukes and their consorts, to afford more privacy, distinction,

[1] Note Sabbattini's emphasis on properly locating the prince's seat; Book I, Chap. 34. Sabbattini, Nicola. *Practica de Fabricar Scene e Machine ne' Teatri.* Ravenna, 1638. Tr. in *The Renaissance Theatre; Serlio, Sabbattini, Furttenbach.* (Modern translations of writings of these men by Allardyce Nicoll, G. R. Kernodle, and J. H. McDowell prepared at the Yale Drama School; in manuscript.)

and, doubtless, security. Such a ducal loge was designed at the rear of the Teatro Farnese.

The early Venetian theatres, as most Italian opera-houses until late in the Eighteenth Century, were basically aristocratic, if not courtly, houses, inasmuch as they were built by wealthy families. These families, although not always titled, retained for themselves and their friends a central rear loge, usually larger and more ornate than the rest. To other persons of means and social position they rented the boxes on a seasonal basis; and, frequently, when the theatres were built by subscription, the boxes became family property. The common people were thus forced into the places of least distinction: the open, top gallery equipped with benches (called the "pigeon-coop") and the benches ranged on the floor of the pit.[1]

The compression of the auditorium and the substitution of the box-system for the old steps were, thus, the prime innovations in theatre architecture which the opera had produced. With the opening of the doors to the general public appeared the top gallery and the benches in the pit. The floor of the hall no longer remained an accessory stage area, for the entire spectacle was now confined behind the proscenium archway. But, throughout the century there was endless experimentation in planning the boxes to improve both sight lines and acoustics.

For example, an extant plan of the Venetian Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo,[2] rebuilt in 1639, exhibits a fully rounded curve of the rear boxes, while those on the sides slant outward from the central axis as they recede from the stage. The pit floor, where the benches are ranged for commoners, is raked to improve visibility; but the theatre as a whole exhibits even a more stark simplicity than the Milan house. Beyond corridors and stairways to the boxes, there are no additional chambers or accommodations of any kind.

The simple, unopened U-plan of box arrangement, although found as late as 1660 in the Teatro di Tor di Nona at Rome[3] and in 1668 in the Teatro degl' Intronati at Siena[4] must have proven quite unsatisfactory in sight lines, inasmuch as each box directly cut off the view from each succeeding box. The architect, Andrea Sighizzi (d. 1684), who apparently built at least two theatres

[1] Galvani, *op. cit.*, 10.

[2] Rep'd in The *Mask*, XIII (1927) Plate 20; Yale-Rockefeller Theatre Collection AF 1-1500. 1.

[3] Plan rep'd. *Ibid.*, 141; Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AF 1-805.

[4] Plan rep'd. *Ibid.*, Plate 19; Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AF 1-850.

(Teatro Formagliari, 1641, and Teatro Malvezzi, 1651, both at Bologna)[1] preferred the opened U-plan. In addition, to improve visibility further, he elevated each box from the proscenium to the rear of the house several inches above the preceding box; and, at the same time, he designed each to project a similar distance further into the auditorium.[2] Such an arrangement was reproduced as late as 1716 by Francesco Galli-Bibiena in the Teatro Filarmonico at Verona[3] and was imitated in part at the Teatro Falcone in Genoa (1652)[4] and at the Teatro Ducale Nuovo in Mantua (1706).[5]

The influence of Sighizzi's complicated design in the Seventeenth Century is unknown; but there is ample evidence to indicate that the opened U-plan of boxes was widely prevalent. This arrangement is found in the Teatro degli Obizzi at Ferrara (1660),[6] in the Teatro della Pergola at Florence (1652),[7] and was fully accepted by F. Carini Motta in his treatise on theatre architecture in 1676.[8]

Near the end of the Seventeenth Century, about 1670, Carlo Fontana (1634-1714) was confronted with the problem of designing a new theatre to replace the old Tor di Nona at Rome, which had originally presented a simple U-plan of boxes. From his extant drawings it is revealed that he considered both the opened and closed U-shapes; but he, apparently, favored a third arrangement; the ovoid or horseshoe plan.[9] According to Giorgi, it was the latter design which was finally adopted when Fontana's pupil, Alessandro Specchi (1668-1729), actually constructed the theatre.[10] Although the Bibiena family continued to experiment with a variety of auditorium shapes and box plans, the Eighteenth Century ultimately saw the triumph of the horseshoe auditorium in the three great opera-houses of the age; the San Carlo at Naples (1737), the Teatro Regio at Turin (1740), and La Scala at Milan (1778). Hand in hand with this development came a great elaboration of both ground plan and internal and external embellishment. From

[1] See Ricci, Corrado. *La Scenografia Italiana.* Milano, 1930, 15.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Plan and elevation Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AG 1-75 and 76.
[4] Plan and elevation rep'd. Craig, E. G. *Books and Theatres.* London, 1925, Plates 13-4.
[5] Plan rep'd *Ibid.*, Plate 12B.
[6] Interior view in the private collection of Dr. Franz Rapp.
[7] Interior view Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AF 1-590. 1.
[8] *Trattato sopra la Struttura de' Teatri e Scene.* Guastalla, 1676. Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AF 1-50ff.
[9] Fontana's designs rep'd. The *Mask,* XIII (1927) Plates 211-6; Yale-Rockefeller T. C. AF 1-810-28.
[10] The *Mask,* XIII, 141.

a simple, rectangular barn with a stage, auditorium, corridors, and stairways, such as the early Venetian theatres and even the famous Teatro di Argentina at Rome (1732), the opera-house emerged as a monumental structure, standing free of other buildings and presenting a magnificent façade. Interiors became equally lavish and impressive, exhibiting great entrance foyers, grand baroque stairways, and an infinite variety of accessory chambers, halls, salons, shops, dressing-rooms, rehearsal halls, and storage areas for stage paraphernalia.

The more popular *commedia dell' arte* and comic opera continued throughout the Eighteenth Century ordinarily housed in small makeshift structures patterned roughly after the glorious opera-houses. Jammed in between other buildings on obscure side streets, they presented no inviting façades nor elaborate ground plans; usually, they were built with only two or three levels of boxes ranged about a small pit.[1]

Vast strides had been made in theatre design since the days of the academists, Serlio and Palladio; but the latter half of the Eighteenth Century brought a new school of classicists, among them Count Enea Arnaldi[2] and Francesco Milizia.[3] In the eyes of these critics the baroque theatre completely failed to serve its purposes. They pointed backward—backward to the Teatro Olimpico, and still further—back to the Greeks. But the baroque theatre had come to stay.

CHARLES H. HOYT: PLAYWRIGHT-MANAGER

by

DOUGLAS L. HUNT

The contemporary success of the Playwrights' Company brings to mind other writer-manager-producer combinations. George M. Cohan, Elmer Rice, and—more recently—William Saroyan have been engaged in producing their own plays. In the last third of the Nineteenth Century New York saw several men successful in similar

[1] Croce, *op. cit.*, 96-7, 120, 186ff., 244ff.
[2] See *Idea di un teatro nelle principali sue parti simile à teatri antichi all' uso moderno accomodato. .Vicenza,* 1762.
[3] *Ibid.*

work. Ned Harrigan had made himself famous as an author of farce comedies which he produced some years before Charles Hoyt accumulated a fortune on Broadway.

In the seventeen years between 1883 and 1900, Hoyt wrote seventeen plays and one operetta. Only the first of these, *A Bunch of Keys* produced in 1883 by Willie Edouin, appeared under any sponsorship other than Hoyt's own. Of the others, fifteen were financially successful; several made a great deal of money; and *A Trip to Chinatown* brought in a half million dollars to the producing firm of Hoyt and Thomas. Such a record is worth examining.

In the early '90's there was not a more important man in New York's theatrical circles than Hoyt. A millionaire before he was thirty, the lessee of the most successful theatre in the city, renowned as a wit and a good fellow about town, Charles Hoyt was truly a Broadway bigshot.

In 1878, when he was only nineteen years old, Hoyt was dramatic critic on the Boston *Post*. Apparently he had fallen into the job when nobody else on the staff wanted it. He had no special aptitude for criticism, but he did have a liking for the theatre. There is nothing unusual, profound, or scholarly about Hoyt's critical writing. His experience in the theatre had been limited, and his reading in the drama was slight or non-existent. All the dramatic notes in the *Post* from 1878 to 1883, the years during which they were written by Hoyt, indicate that the writer had only the point of view of the ordinary theatre-goer who wants to be amused for a couple of hours on a night that would be otherwise dull. For precisely that reason, Hoyt was extraordinarily well equipped to know what the public wanted. When he wrote and produced his own plays, the knowledge of what to give the ticket-buyers made him rich.

He wrote *A Bunch of Keys* in 1882-83 for Willie Edouin at Edouin's suggestion. Unsuccessful in its first performances, it was withdrawn and rewritten. Charles W. Thomas, a fellow worker on the *Post* in Boston, told Hoyt that the play was the beginning of a new type of farce writing, but he insisted that the actors were doing the thing in an antiquated style. Hoyt persuaded Edouin to let him direct the rehearsals of the revised version himself, which he did in the light of audience reaction to the first performances. The

success of the play, immediate and long-lasting, was proof to Hoyt that he had struck a formula that was sure-fire.

From that time on, Hoyt always had a business manager with whom he worked in the production of his own plays. Charles Thomas resigned from the *Post* to become Hoyt's partner. Both men were twenty-four years old.[1] Their first joint production, *A Rag Baby,* was presented in New York at Tony Pastor's Fourteenth Street Theatre on Easter Monday, April 14, 1884. It ran until Saturday, May 3, and then took to the road. Later it entered New York again and showed for several weeks in Haverly's Theatre after August 16, 1884. Frank Daniels, a well-known comedian, diminutive in stature, famous for his surprised eyebrows, played the part of Old Sport, who made famous the catch-line: "Let me grasp the hand that grasped the hand of Sullivan." Hoyt had written the play with Daniels in mind. Other notables in the cast were Harry Conor and Jennie Yeamans. For years the play was done in the smaller cities of the country and on the New York stage itself. There were many revivals of it, Daniels for more than ten years continuing to play the part he originated.

It was Hoyt's practice to put a piece on the road for a time before it opened in a New York theatre. Sometimes his play toured the country for nearly a year before a New York audience saw it. All this time the play was constantly being changed, for Hoyt watched it zealously as it progressed from place to place, sitting in the audience, jotting down notes as he watched the spectators' reactions to lines or scenes. When finally he brought the company into the metropolis, the play sometimes bore little likeness to the one that had started out perhaps many months before.[2]

Hoyt's second farce after he joined with his friend, Charles Thomas, was *A Parlor Match* which opened in New Jersey at As-

[1] Thomas was born in Burlington, Iowa, in 1859, but he lived most of his life in the East. He was educated in Maine. While attending the Little Blue Academy of Farmington College, Maine, in 1871-72, he was Nat Goodwin's seatmate. Later, through Thomas, Hoyt became acquainted with Goodwin. Thomas was a very active person, whose recreations were yachting and trotting races. He was secretary of the Actor's Fund and a member of the best sporting clubs. He died of consumption on November 17, 1893, in Tucson, Arizona.

[2] Original manuscripts of the Hoyt plays are not in existence so far as I can find out. According to Hoyt's will there were made five copies of the plays that were to be regarded as the "official" plays. One of these sets is in the New York Public Library. It has been brought to my attention through comparing these "official" readings with other copies of the individual plays extant in other places—most of them prompt copies once owned by actors who appeared in the plays—that there are sometimes several different versions. It is not at all surprising in the light of the fact mentioned above, that the plays were constantly being changed by Hoyt himself. See the volume on Hoyt edited by the writer in the *America's Lost Plays* series; there is a discussion of the problem of determining a text; and in the case of *A Trip to Chinatown* two versions of Act III are printed to show the differences.

bury Park, September, 1883. After a year of touring and revision, this play, with the two comedians for whose talents Hoyt had designed it—Charles Evans and William Hoey—opened in New York at Tony Pastor's Theatre, September, 1884. More than a decade later, in September, 1896, it was revived at the Herald Square Theatre by Florenz Ziegfeld. Mr. Ziegfeld billed it as the "Evergreen Success" and in its second act presented the then unknown Anna Held. The lovely Anna made her debut with several songs.

From this time on, Hoyt wrote and produced plays under the firm name of Hoyt and Thomas. *A Tin Soldier* opened in the Standard Theatre, New York, on May 3, 1886. During the same year Hoyt produced an operetta of his own composition starring Lillian Russell and Tony Hart, *The Maid and the Moonshiner.* It played a short engagement in the Standard Theatre from August 16 to 28, 1886. The music for Hoyt's lyrics was done by Edward Solomon. Hoyt ascribed the failure of the piece to the fact that its title began with the word "The" instead of the customary "A"; he was a superstitious man and never again broke his rule.

As stage manager for *A Hole in the Ground,* which opened in the Fourteenth Street Theatre on September 12, 1887, Hoyt hired Julian Mitchell. Mitchell remained in Hoyt's employ to the end of the writer's career, arranging with great skill and ingenuity the many elaborate stage effects that Hoyt demanded. After Hoyt's death in 1900, Mitchell was associated for years with Ziegfeld, George M. Cohan, and Ned Wayburn.

A Midnight Bell opened in San Francisco, California, on April 4, 1888, traveled a year, and showed first in New York at the Bijou Theatre on March 5, 1889, with Maude Adams making her Broadway debut as Dot Bradbury, the minister's sister. While that play was on the road, Hoyt produced another, *A Brass Monkey,* which he showed to New York in the Bijou for thirteen weeks beginning on October 15, 1888. After that came *A Texas Steer* on November 10, 1890, starring Tim Murphy as Maverick Brander and Flora Walsh, who was Hoyt's first wife, as Brander's daughter, Bossy.

By 1891, Hoyt and Thomas were powers in the New York theatre. They were both young men hardly more than thirty years old, but they had already produced a series of successful plays; they had a new play to produce about once a year, and they had a

distinct clientele to view it. More important, they had plenty of money. It was natural that they should want to have a theatre of their own in which to produce their new offerings. Many of their contemporary producers had their own houses. Lester Wallack had dominated New York long before this time with his own theatre and his famous stock company. Charles Frohman had broken into the game as a single promoter with his own house in which he presented *The Stranglers of Paris* in 1883. Before that year he and his two brothers had controlled the Madison Square Theatre at Twenty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. Daniel Frohman, Augustin Daly, and David Belasco were already managing their own theatres; Belasco was known widely as a writer-producer.

On September 15, 1891, Hoyt and Thomas secured a lease on the afore-mentioned Madison Square Theatre for a period of three years, and that house became one that was eagerly watched by the New York theatre public. The first lease expired in the spring of 1894 and was renewed for a long term by Frank McKee, Hoyt's new financial partner after the death of Thomas in 1893. It was still under the Hoyt management at the time of the playwright's death in 1900 and was continued by McKee until the lease expired in 1903.

In this house the later successes of Hoyt were staged. In it the spectacular and record-breaking run of more than 650 performances of *A Trip to Chinatown* was housed. In times of theatrical stress and financial distress it went along as a money-maker for its managers, becoming proverbial along the Rialto as a house of good luck. Even before the long run of *Chinatown* the theatre had held one record of this sort, for in it Steele MacKaye's *Hazel Kirke* had set a record of 486 performances in 1880-81, never equalled at the Madison Square until the time Hoyt's extravaganza took so firm a grasp on the fancy of the town.

The building had had an interesting history. It was erected in 1862 and, before Hoyt leased it, had been remodeled several times, once after a disastrous fire that gutted it completely on January 1, 1873. Various producers and managers had controlled it from time to time. George Christy had presented his minstrels there in 1865 and 1866. James Fisk, Jr., leased it and elaborately redecorated it in 1868. Augustin Daly held it for several years, producing in it such hits as *Frou-Frou, Saratoga, Divorce,* and *Article* 47. After

the fire, Steele MacKaye rebuilt the interior to accord with his grandiose ideas. He installed an early form of air-conditioning and a double-stage on the elevator principle. Thereafter the theatre housed such successes as *Esmeralda, Young Mrs. Winthrop,* and *Hazel Kirke.*

As soon as Hoyt and Thomas took it over, the building became known as Hoyt's Madison Square Theatre; later, when the lease was renewed in 1894, it became known simply as Hoyt's Theater.

Hoyt's *A Trip to Chinatown* opened on November 9, 1891. On November 14 the New York *Spirit of the Times* commented as follows:

> Charles Hoyt, our best writer of farcical comedies, was the hero of the occasion, on Monday night, when he hoisted his flag over the miraculous Madison Square theatre and inaugurated what we hope will be a long and prosperous reign with his *Trip to Chinatown.* Built in imitation of an English chapel . . . for Steele MacKaye, the Madison Square theatre has been a little gold mine ever since *Hazel Kirke* was produced there. . . .
>
> Called out, on Monday night, to define his policy, Manager Hoyt modestly stated that it was not his intention to try to elevate the stage, as Madison Square had an elevator stage already. His object was to amuse the public, and, incidentally, to make money. Suiting the action to the word, as Hamlet advises, he begins well with *A Trip to Chinatown,* which is very amusing and is sure to be profitable, besides being as clean and pure as all of Mr. Hoyt's other farcicalities.
>
> *A Trip to Chinatown* is named upon the principle of Artemus Ward's lecture upon "The Babes in the Wood," because there were no babes and no wood in the lecture. Instead, it is crammed with absurd situations and nimble jokes. . . .
>
> Our cloistered friend of the *Times* is a little afraid that the old habitués of the Madison Square might be somewhat shocked by the fun and frolic. But, no; the old habitués were frightened away long ago. . . . There is nothing in *A Trip to Chinatown* to bring the blush of shame to the cheek of innocence. . . . Take a Trip to Chinatown and leave all your troubles at home.

The farce established a new all-time record for consecutive performances, 657, before it closed on August 17, 1893. During this run, Charles Thomas died, and Frank McKee became Hoyt's partner in December, 1893.

Hoyt's management of the play was typical. He had tried it out for months on the road before New York saw it. Its first presentation on any stage had been in Decatur, Illinois, on September 18, 1890. For more than a year it toured the provinces, playing mostly one-night stands. All this time Hoyt was changing it and improving it as he watched audiences react to its gags and situations.

After its metropolitan success, Hoyt formed other companies and sent them out on the road. Everywhere *A Trip to Chinatown* was popular. Once Hoyt brought in a road company and played it in the Harlem Opera House for a week from August 29, 1892, thus achieving the unique distinction of having the same play running in two different theatres in the same city at the same time.

The play, starring Harry Conor as Welland Strong, a hypochondriac, was a piece with musical interruptions. So flexible was it that many different songs, most of them by Hoyt with music by Percy Gaunt, were presented from time to time. A few songs were so much part of the play, however, that they were always sung in it. The most successful of them all was "The Bowery." Everybody in the country hummed it. It was invariably encored many times, and there were many different stanzas of it. Conor added new ones from time to time, changing the series of his endless misfortunes on the Bowery. The publishers sold a hundred thousand copies of the sheet music, and Hoyt netted thousands of dollars in royalties. So popular did it become that honest merchants in the Bowery district petitioned for its removal from the play, declaring that its uncomplimentary words were hurting their trade. Hoyt, probably unkowningly, changed the topography of the city with one song. Also in *Chinatown* were "Reuben, Reuben, I've Been Thinking" and "After the Ball." The former was written by Hoyt; the latter was the work of Charles K. Harris, then an impecunious young song writer in Milwaukee who used trickery to get his song into a road company without Hoyt's knowledge.

The new season, 1893-94, opened on September 18 with Hoyt's play, *A Temperance Town*. It ran 125 performances to January

8, 1894. On that date Hoyt produced his *A Texas Steer* in revival; it ran about a month. Then *A Trip to Chinatown* came back on February 12 and stayed until March 31. On the 26th, the play celebrated its seven hundredth performance in the Madison Square.

After extensive repairs the theatre re-opened on October 8, 1894, now known simply as Hoyt's Theatre. The first offering was *A Milk White Flag,* Hoyt's satire on the home guard companies. It played until February 23, 1895.

Before Hoyt produced another of his own compositions, he brought to his theatre a number of plays, chief among them Clyde Fitch's *The Liar.* Thus as a manager he showed his willingness to try various works other than his own. It was not until January, 1897, that his newest piece was seen in his theatre, a satire on the woman suffrage movement, *A Contented Woman,* in which he starred his second wife, Caroline Miskel. In November of that year he produced another of his own plays, *A Stranger in New York,* in the Madison Square. It was the last of his pieces to be produced in his own theatre.

The roster of the Hoyt plays is completed with four other titles, plays performed in other theatres than Hoyt's. They are *A Runaway Colt, A Black Sheep, A Day and a Night in New York,* and *A Dog in a Manger.* The first three mentioned were only moderately successful, and the last was a complete failure. It never saw New York at all. Hoyt was very ill when it was completed and the play lasted only a week after January 30, 1899, in Washington, D. C. The fact that Hoyt was incapable of seeing and rectifying the faults of this play is more indicative of the state of his mind than it is of the fact that the play was mediocre to start with. So were most of the rest of his pieces.

Thus Hoyt's work as an American dramatist ended. His friends knew that his day was fast coming to a close, that unless his habits of life were watched and controlled, unless he took a long rest with the best of medical care, he would never write another line. At this time he was barely forty years old.

His business partner, Frank McKee, signed papers that helped to commit him to an insane asylum. Other friends secured his release, believing that McKee was wrong in his action. But Hoyt was too ill ever to recover. He died on November 20, 1900. McKee carried on the business of the management of Hoyt's

Theatre for another three years. Then the lease expired on the building. But many of the plays which Hoyt had written, and produced with the help of Thomas and later of McKee, continued to be popular for a number of years. Hoyt, as a writer-producer-manager, delighted nearly a whole generation of American theatre-goers.

THE THEATRE COLLECTION

by

JOHN VAN DRUTEN

When I was small, my mother had a friend whom she did not very much like. (Everyone's mother has; I know that.) We did not see her very often, and as she had no children, I never went to her house, but my mother reported that it contained a complete bound set of the *Play Pictorial.* This monthly publication, dating from about 1901, was not unlike the American *Theatre Magazine,* except that it devoted itself exclusively to one play each issue, giving photographs, excerpts from the dialogue, music of the songs if the show were a musical, a description of the dresses, and a lengthy analysis of the plot and acting, written by the editor, Mr. B. W. Findon, in a style clinquant and tinselled with cliches, whimsies, euphemisms and circumlocutions. At the back of each number were the casts of all the plays produced during the preceding month, a resumé of their plots, and great deal of assorted material dealing with the theatre in general. It cost sixpence a copy, although the back numbers (listed on the cover) soared to prices sometimes as high as ten shillings, and it was then (and indeed still is) to me a most glamorous and enchanting publication. The fact that Mrs. Blank's home housed a whole set of it seemed to me a quite sufficient reason for going there, and I could not understand my mother's disinclination to visit her.

When I went to play with other children in their homes, I was always allowed, as visitor, to choose what toys we played with; surely, if the evening dragged, my mother could have said: "May I look at your *Play Pictorials?*" and after that everything would

have been lovely—for her, at any rate. Or, rather, for her, if she had been me, or had shared my tastes. And I should think, too, that Mrs. Blank, who probably found Mother no better company than she found her, would have been glad of the diversion, would have brought out those *Play Pictorials,* would have *had* them out and in evidence, even, against such a sticky occasion as this. And, since she owned them, she probably enjoyed them herself, so that she would have had a good time too, for they are something of which one cannot tire. (I am sorry for "going on" about them, but they are a symbol.)

Mrs. Blank also knew an actress, or, rather an actress' mother and liked to talk about her, which I think my mother was inclined to regard as "showing off." At any rate, Mother did not hang on her every word, gathering every scrap of information, as I should have done. (I really should be more tolerant of the movie magazines, with their articles about what the stars like to eat for breakfast. Who am I to sneer, who used to read so gluttonously the "Answers to Correspondents" column in the back of the *Play Pictorials,* garnering details about the private lives and pasts of quite obscure actors and actresses, of which I can still remember almost every word? I just do not happen to care for the movies, and so cannot understand the passion, any more than I could my brother's and cousin's porings over *Wisden's Cricketing Annual,* and their pre-occupation with the bowling and batting averages of the players, but really one should be charitable.)

All of this has taken me a long way from Mrs. Blank, who only came in, anyway, because as I look back on her, I see that her house contained the first theatre collection, however tiny, of which I heard, and the fact that I was denied acquaintance with it has perhaps strengthened the fascination that such a library has for me. My first personal encounter with one happened a few years later. I was about twelve, and my interest in the theatre had already hardened into the absorbing passion that it has since remained. (There is nothing exclusive or remarkable about it; everyone who has any connection at all with the theatre is infected by it; they turn to the theatrical columns in the morning's paper before the front page news; prick up their ears at the sound of the word "Theatre" as at the mention of their own name, and will read absolutely anything that is printed in the form of dialogue.) Until that time, however,

I had no one with whom to share it, but at my day school in London I struck up a friendship with a boy about four years my senior. He was an American, his father a journalist, a sometime Boston dramatic critic, I believe, and the theatre was their family passion. Their house seemed to breathe with it, and my friend's own room at the top was a treasure-house to me. There were all the *Stage Year Books* (I had never heard of them until then); bookshelves lined with plays; great filing cabinets filled with notices of every play in London and New York for years past; and on the desk and littered over the chairs were stacks of newspapers, blue-pencilled around the theatrical news, for clipping. Entering the room, I was as Aladdin, coming into the cave of jewels.

The friendship, however, ended, little more than a year later, when the family returned to America with the outbreak of the World War. (I suppose they took their library with them, and I hope it is still in existence.) In the meantime, however, I had tried to start just such a collection, myself, keeping the programmes of the plays that my parents and my elder brother went to see, and clipping the notices of every play from the morning and evening papers that came into the house, but that, too, was ended by the war. My parents gave up housekeeping, moving us into an hotel; the contents of the house were put into storage, and when, four years later, they came out again, the programmes and the clippings were nowhere to be found. So died a dream that I have never had the heart, the energy or the opportunity to try to rebuild. Circumstances have moulded my life ever since so that it has been without permanent residence in which to store such material, and it saddens me to think of the amount of precious stuff that I have thrown away, sometimes sadly, sometimes almost in defiance, in my time.

I have learned better now, learned where to send it, and where to find it if the need or the urge comes upon me to consult it. It was only a couple of years ago that I discovered the existence of the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library. On my first visit there, I found myself gasping at its extensiveness and at the insatiability of its maw. There is nothing theatrical that is not grist to its mill; no play, no performance or performer too obscure for its notice. For the most part, my connection with it has been prompted by curiosity and fascination—the natural outgrowth of my childhood feelings about Mrs. Blank and her *Play Pictorials*,

(They are all there in the Theatre Collection, of course, although a rival publication, on similar lines, called *The Playgoer in Society* is strangely absent. Will someone, reading these words, please fill a need—of mine, as well as of the Library—if he is able?) I have spent mornings there, dipping into its contents, as into an enchanted grab-bag, bringing up names of half-forgotten plays from the tangled work-basket of my memory, and searching them out among the files, where I turned up their notices, feeling as I read them as though I were giving them life again, on the lines of Maeterlinck's Land of Memory in the *Blue Bird;* and generally rummaging in the richness, gawping and peering, diving into this and that, and wishing that there were more time and that I knew what to do with it all, instead of just giving myself a bad case of theatrical indigestion, like a child turned loose in a candy store, or a greedy adult in a delicatessen.

More recently, however, I found a practical use for it, which is, after all, what it is designed for, rather than to pander to the magpie appetites of people like myself. I was directing the comedy *The Damask Cheek,* of which I was co-author; a play laid in New York in 1909, a year in which I myself was in England and only eight years old. The point which first sent me to the library was in connection with *The Easiest Way,* the "succès de scandale" of that year, references to which occur frequently in *The Damask Cheek.* Someone had challenged my quotation of the famous last line, and I turned to the Theatre Collection for assistance. Actually, it seemed at first only to deepen my confusion by producing various typed and printed copies of the play, and quotations of the dialogue in magazine picture captions, which contradicted each other, but, on the advice of the Curator of the Collection, I wrote to Miss Frances Starr, the actress who created the leading role, to establish what was actually spoken. Miss Starr confirmed the majority text that I had read in the library. Once embarked on this research, it led me further and further afield. The library owns the press-books of Mr. David Belasco, where I read a number of the original notices of *The Easiest Way,* from which arose our press-agent's notion of copying the "throw-away" circular of the first production to include in our opening night programme. The Theatre Collection provided the circular for us to copy. Miss Flora Robson and Miss Celeste Holm, of *The Damask Cheek* company, coming with me on

one of my excursions, discovered in the *Theatre Magazine* of that year the exact styles of coiffure that they each wanted to wear; and the scene and costume designer, looking with me through the inevitable *Play Pictorials,* found suggestions for his costuming in gowns worn by Miss Phyllis Dare and Miss Ethel Irving in *The Girl in the Train* and *Dame Nature.* It was from photographs produced from the Collection that we were able to refute a criticism which had been levelled at my direction during rehearsals, to the effect that ladies in 1909 did not cross their legs. We not only found that they did, but "how" they did, and Miss Robson seized upon the pictures greedily.

These are but illustrations, drawn from my own experience, of the kind of services that the Collection can offer, and I have no doubt that the Curator, Mr. George Freedley, can amplify them a hundred-fold with the names of other playwrights who have turned to the Collection for assistance.

If I seem to suggest that the New York library is the only one of its kind, a phoenix among libraries so to speak, that, of course, is profoundly untrue. It happens merely to be the one with which I have closest acquaintance. In England, the great university libraries have much material, although I doubt their concern with the minutiae which make the New York collection so delightful. In London, the British Museum contains much, although alas it is unsegregated and lacks the helpful and enthusiastic librarian who is all-important. In the Victoria and Albert Museum, in the Department of Prints and Drawings under the supervision of Mr. James Laver (himself a playwright), there exists a great collection of theatrical programmes, which is the work of Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven. The continent of Europe is (or was) well-sown with theatre libraries, and America, too, has some, particularly in the East where Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the Library of Congress, and the Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum of Columbia are the leading ones. The Public Libraries of Detroit and St. Louis, the University of Texas, the McCord Theatre Museum, the Huntington Library in San Marino, and the Los Angeles Public Library (where I myself have also made research) are among the others offering hospitality to the writer.

But the United States are large and many. There are not yet as many theatre collections as there are states to house them; and

if this seemingly irresponsible article has any value or purpose it is to urge the extension of such collections on other institutions. I am not the only one of my kind; the woods are full of us. The New York collection has been invaluable to me; similar ones in other places would be invaluable to the others—the ones engaged upon research in Drama, and all the playwrights, practicing or would-be.

Indeed, the uses and merits of such collections seem to me so obvious and apparent that I am sure I need not expatiate upon them, and would prefer, for my finish, to return to the fascination, irrespective of their employment, that they hold for me. When the Curator told me what his job was, I felt that I could not imagine a more delightful one, and having watched him at it, I still feel the same, envying him not only his material and his resources, but his efficiency and capability in handling them. Indeed, there is only one thing that I can see against his occupation, and that is that he may not smoke at his work. But there is a briar in every Eden.

THE DARTMOUTH PLAYS, 1779-1782

by

HAROLD G. RUGG

The writings that follow are two playscripts definitely known to have been written by an American and performed during the Revolutionary War. These dialogues, as they were called, belong to what might be characterized as the School Drama, a common feature of college commencements in the Eighteenth Century. Dialogues were also given on different occasions throughout the year. Although the other commencement oratory was delivered in Latin, Greek, English, and even Hebrew, the dialogues at Dartmouth were usually given in English. A reference has been found to one presented as early as 1773. John Ledyard, the explorer, was at Dartmouth for a year and acted in *Cato*. In 1774, the well-known New Hampshire historian, Jeremy Belknap, came to Hanover to attend Commencement. In his diary we find this recorded: "McGregore and Swetland, two Bachelors, spoke a dialogue of Lord Lyttleton's between Apicius and Darteneuf upon good eating and

drinking. The Mercury (who comes in at the close of the piece) performed his part but clumsily; but the two epicures did well, and the President laughed as heartily as the rest. . . ." Other later references are found to dialogues at Dartmouth. At Harvard, works of a similar nature may have preceded these at Dartmouth and there are also a few known scripts of this type that were performed at a slightly later date at Yale.

With these scripts from the Dartmouth archives, here published for the first time, is a letter that indicates how their production was received. It also shows that type-casting was not an unthought of fact at the time. John Phillips, the recipient of the letter and scripts, was the patron of Phillips Exeter and Phillips Andover Academies. Some years ago, the writings were returned to Dartmouth College, as a gift to the Library by Mr. Matt B. Jones.

In terms of present day interest, these playlets are more than simply historical curiosities. Ostensibly in the form of skits, both are, in fact, scripts of social content.

A Dialogue between an Englishman and an Indian deals with the position of the underprivileged during the revolutionary period, the underprivileged being the Indian who, through a definite venture in type-casting, is allowed to speak for his race and its position in relation to the reactionary political and social controls we, as a people, were fighting at the time. The Indian, struggling against a traditional point of view, successfully demonstrates himself to be stronger intellectually, spiritually, and culturally than the Englishman who is supposed to have these qualities exclusively, as a prerogative of his position and birth.

From the modern point of view of structure and terminology, the writing is a drama dealing with a conflict of ideas. In the present idiom of the theatre, it would be called a "drama of ideas." Altogether, with its structure, attitude, and what humor it has, it would be characterized as Shavian, at least by intention.

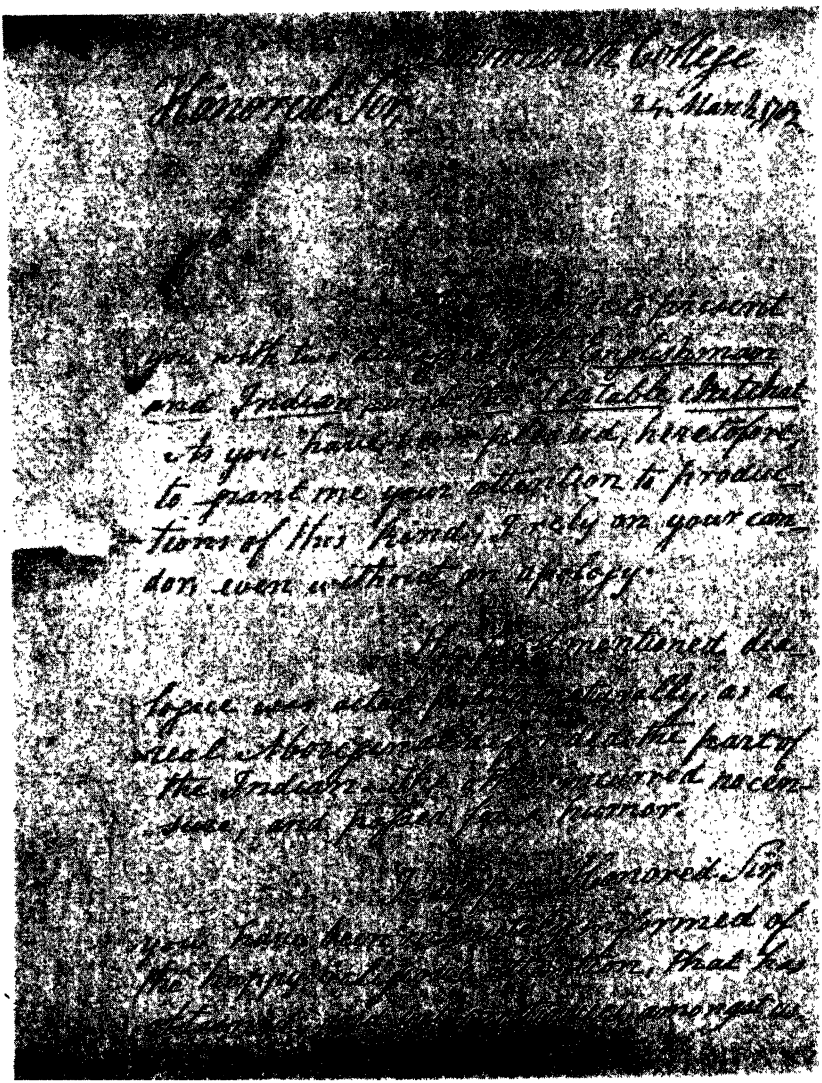
Psychologically and historically, it is interesting to see that the same social problem, type of characters, and author's attitude when called upon for dramatic treatment tended to create the same psychological pattern of dramatic composition that we find today.

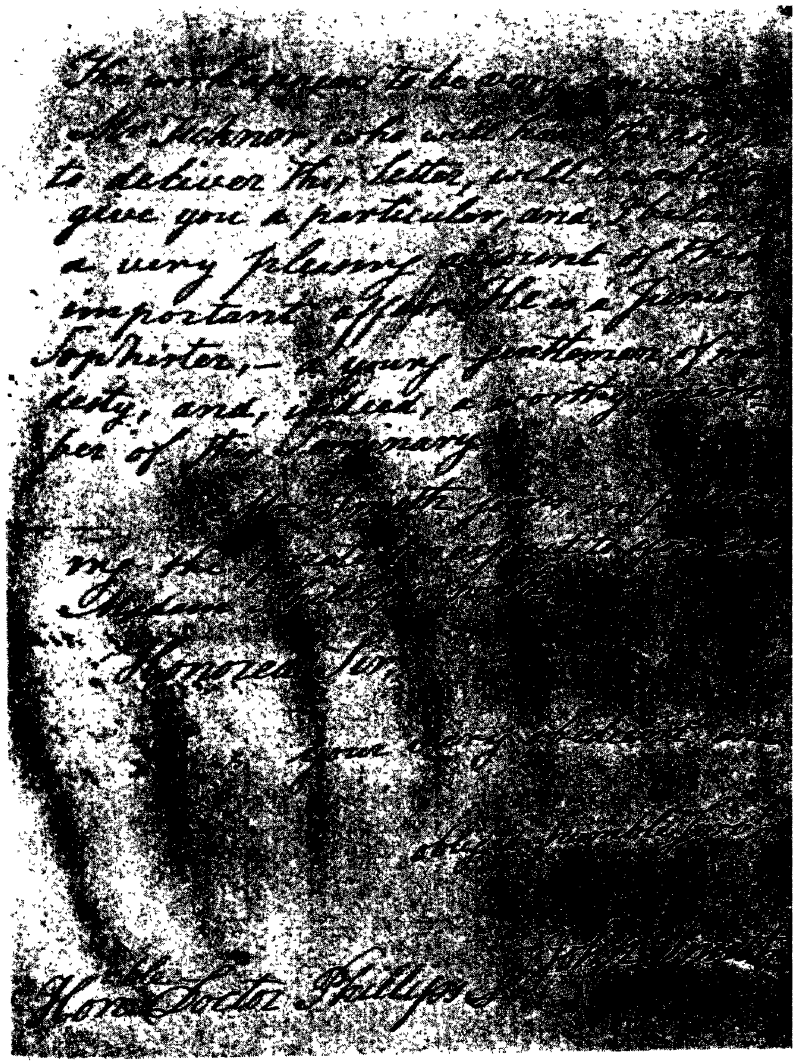
The second dialogue, *A Little Tea Table Chitchat,* deals with certain aspects of the problem of inflation and its results under political and personal manipulation during the revolutionary period.

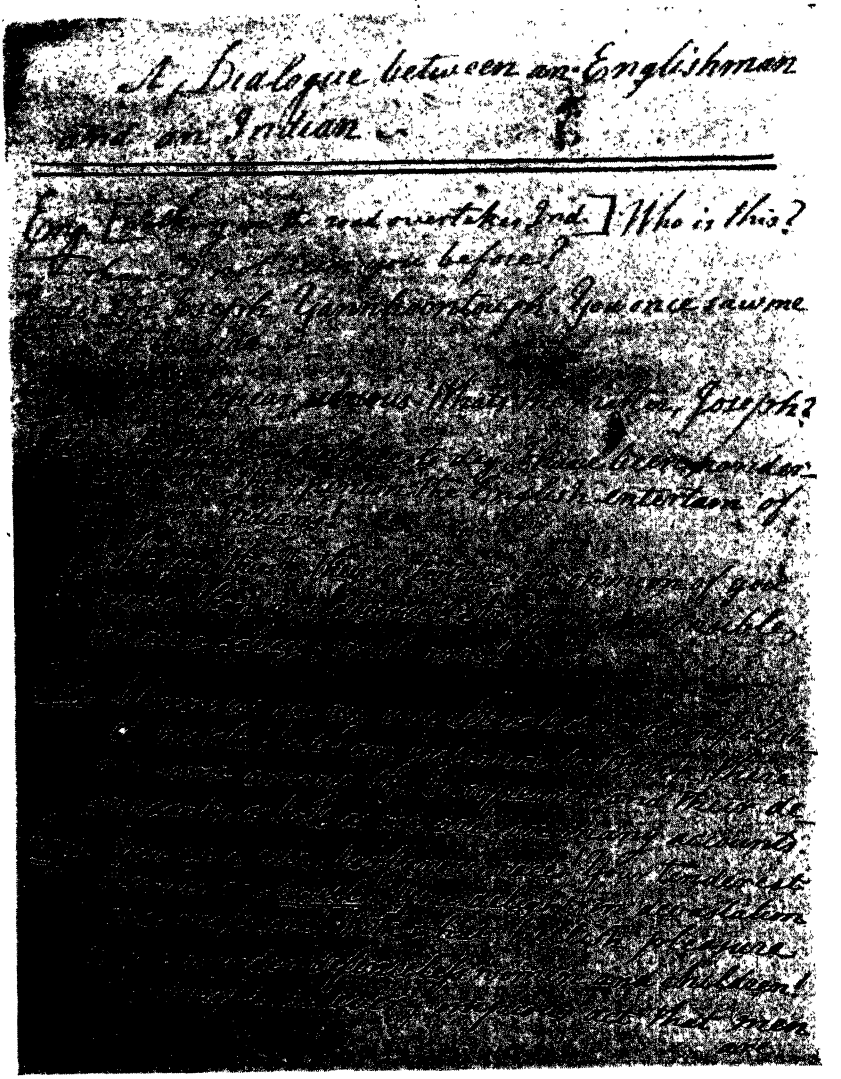
In its psychological mold this writing, as drama, is circumstantial. In other words, the essence of the personal and social conflict is presented indirectly through narrative dialogue and not through direct exposition of the conflict. The writing is, as a consequence, dramatic by implication only. As satire, it is an excellent piece of writing. In the day it was written, it must have been most beautifully pointed in this respect for the intelligent American. It still is, for anyone interested in the politico-economic scene of today. It is also interesting to note that in the subtitle the subject of the discourse or play is set forth as "an ancient discovery reduced to modern practice." Such a description might be considered apt not only then and now, but during certain periods of the Roman and Greek civilizations as well.

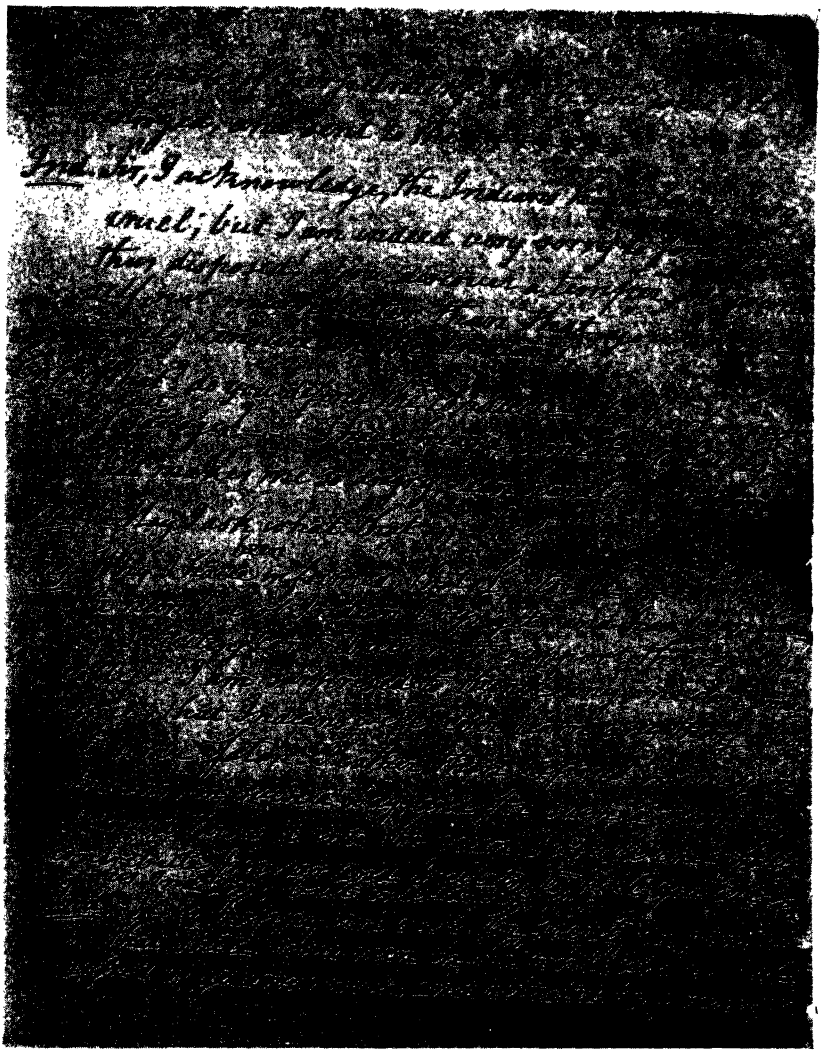
The author of the plays, John Smith (1752-1809), was Senior Professor and Professor of Learned Languages at Dartmouth teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and other oriental languages. He was also a clergyman. These plays would seem to have been the products of youthful levity for in his later years he published sundry sermons and grammars in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldee. No other plays of his are known.

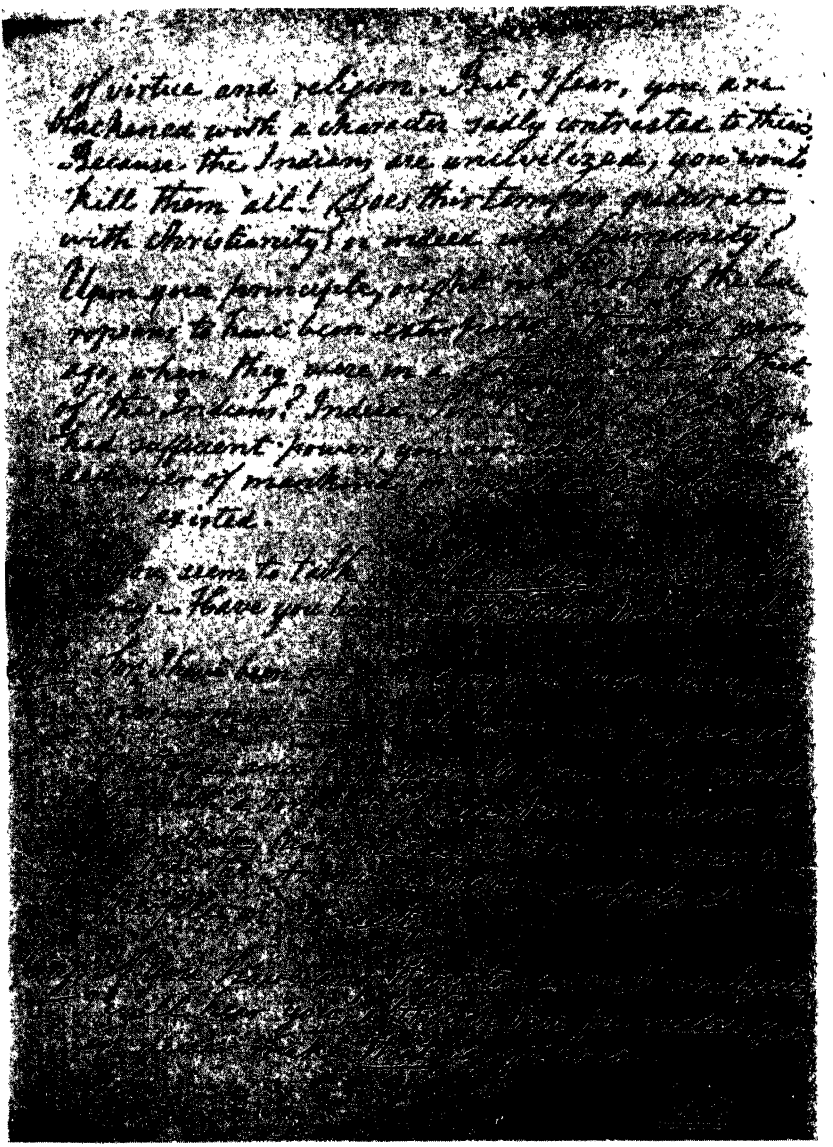
The engraved reproductions of the original scripts and the covering letter are presented for your inspection.

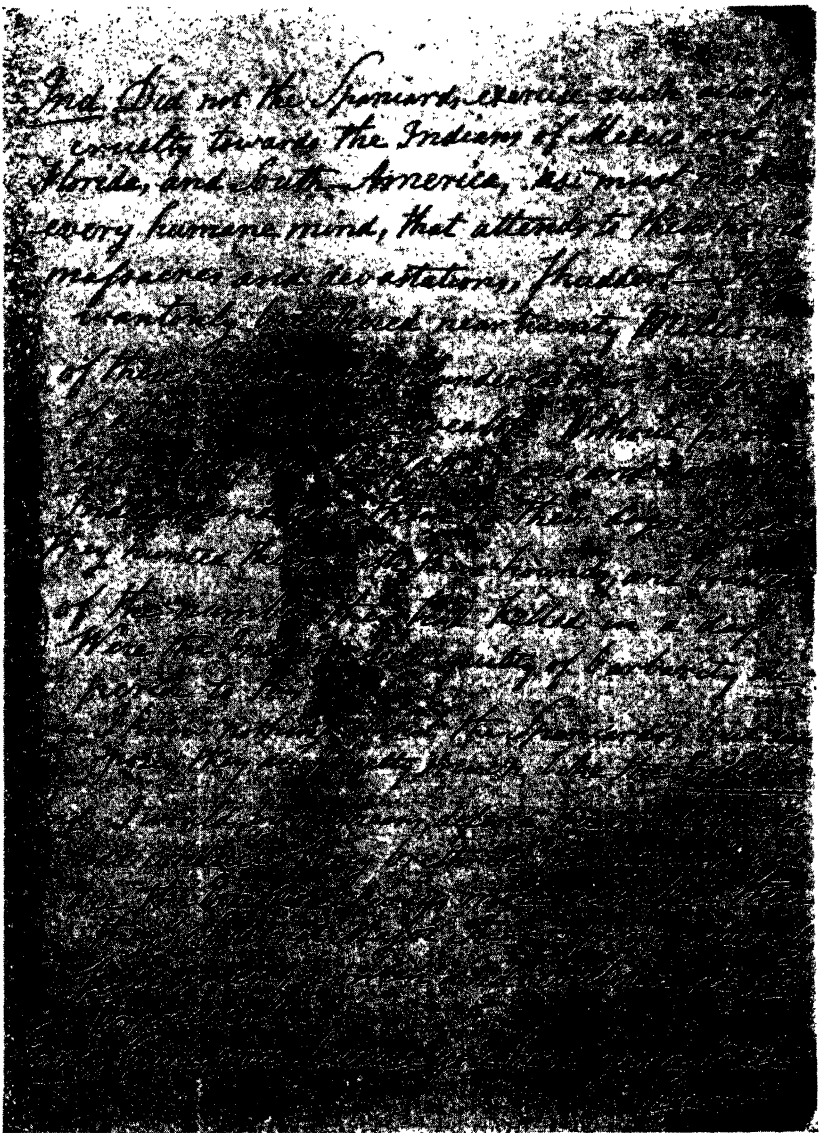


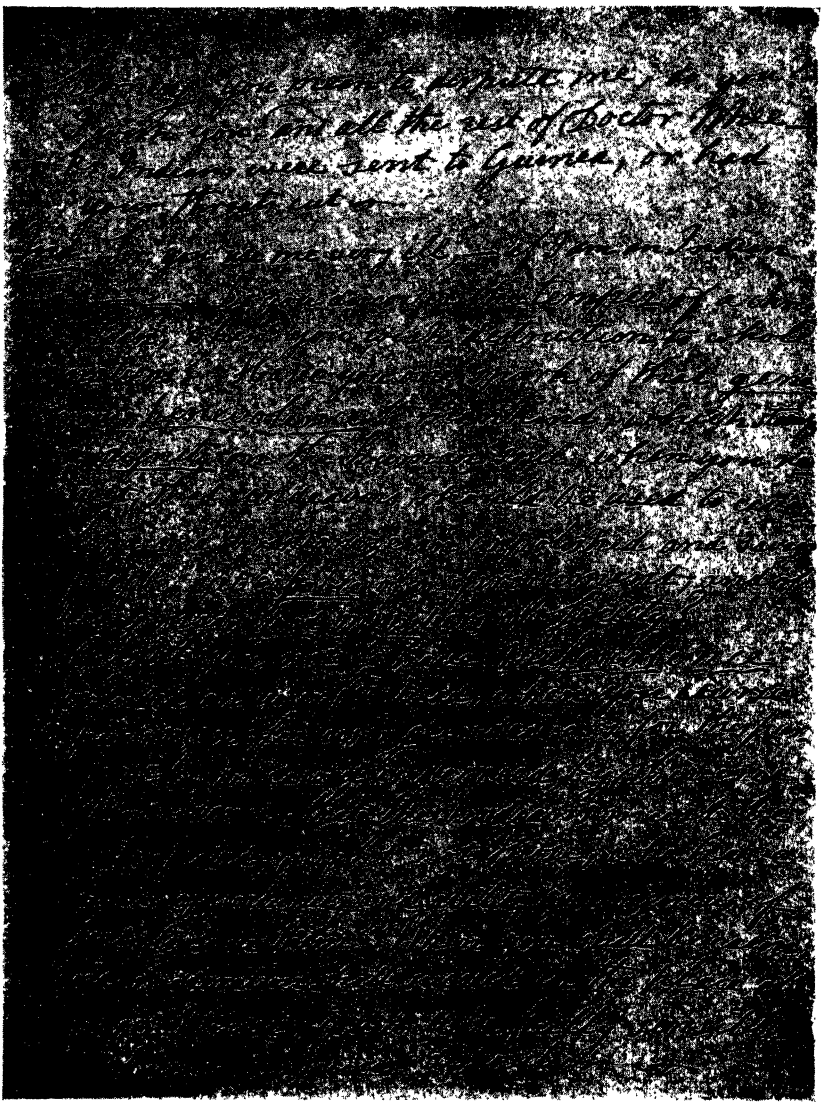


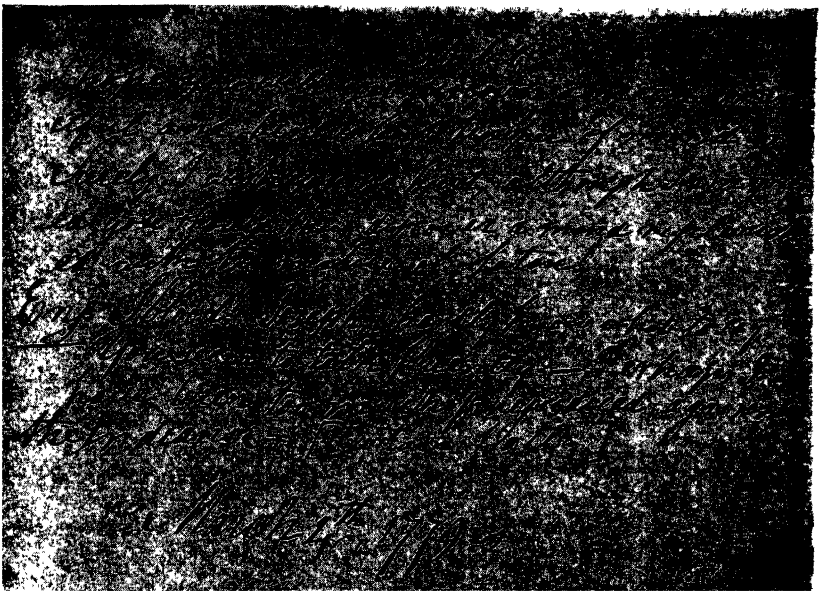


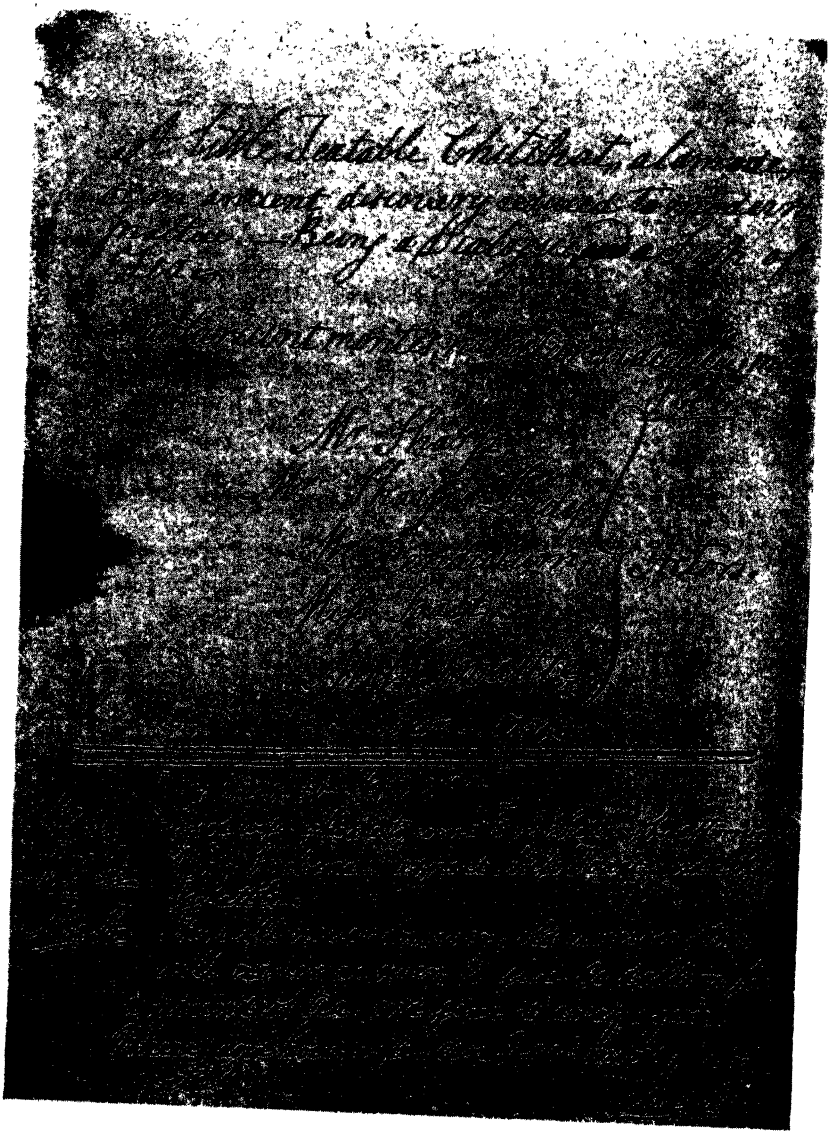


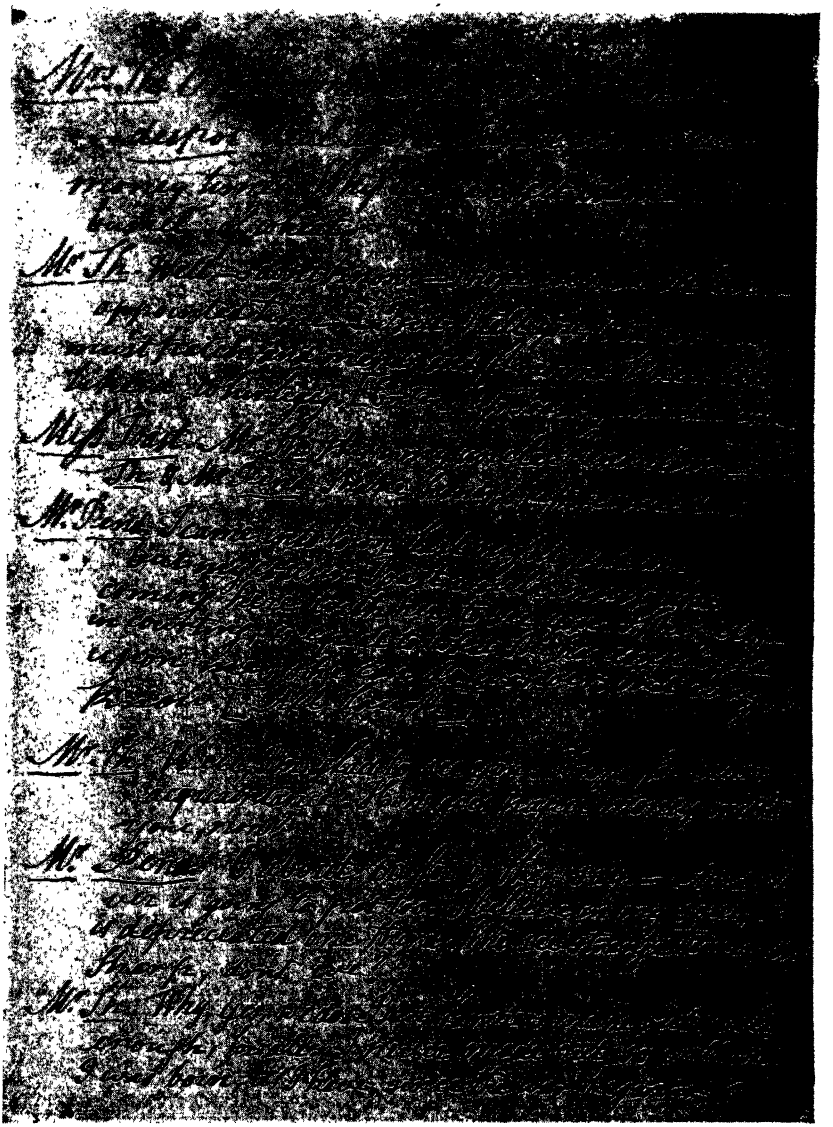


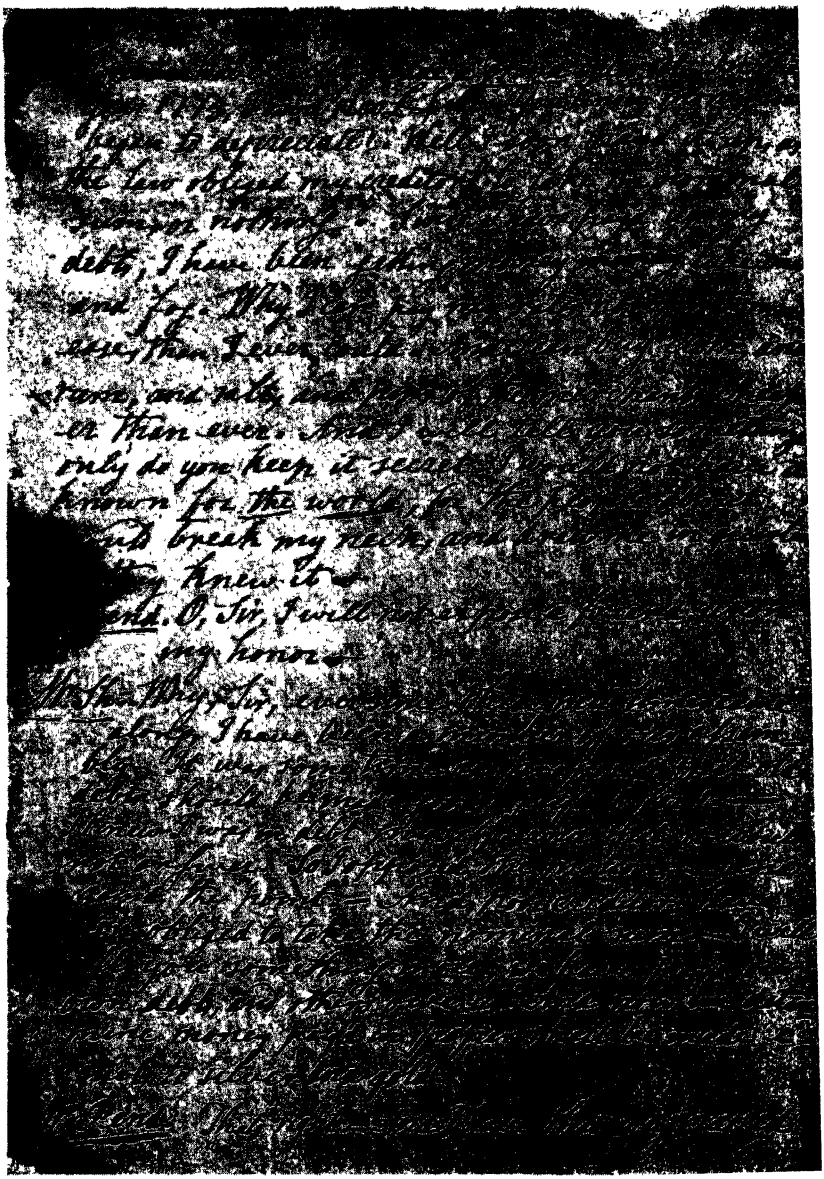


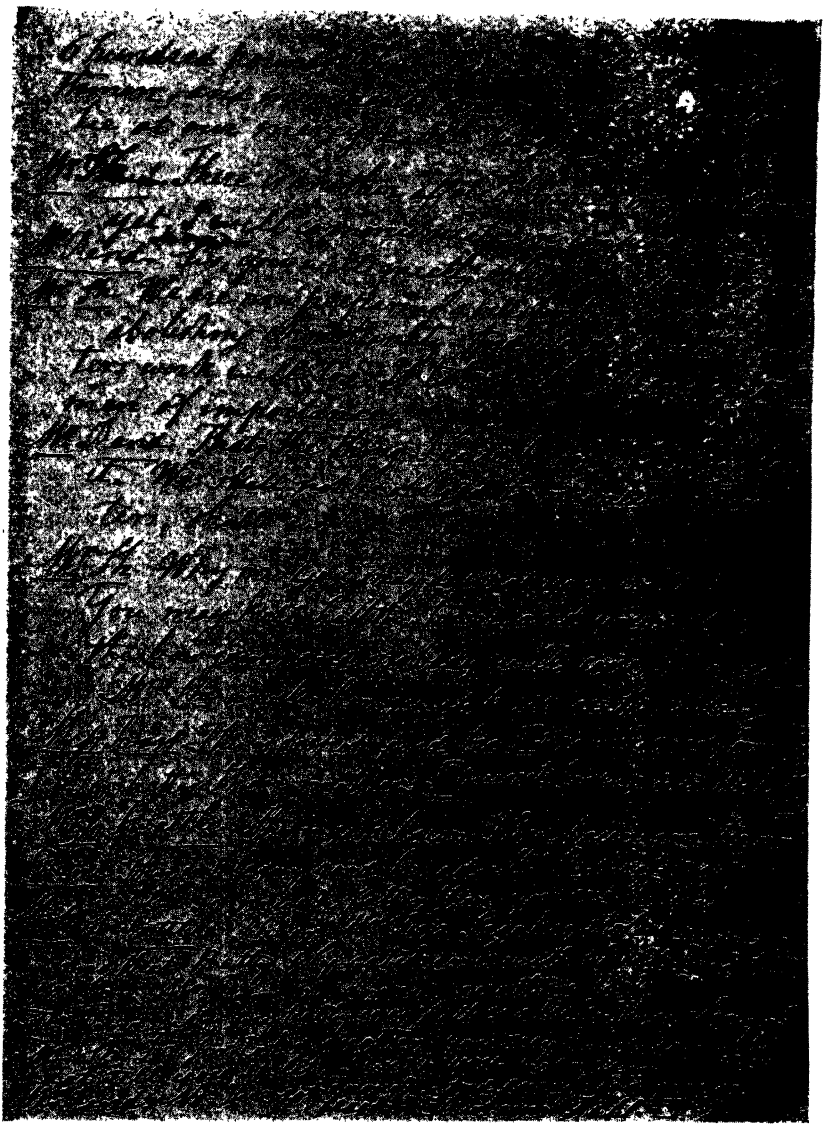












EDITORIAL COMMENT

We have often noticed the apparent restraint that exists between the purely professional worker in the theatre and the one with scholarly or academic interests. The attitude of each is usually one of slight superiority in regard to the other. Why this restraint exists is not inexplicable. Why this sense of difference between the two groups should continue to exist is not explainable. Other professional groups such as doctors and engineers do not have it. Each group contributes to the life of the theatre and in turn lives by the theatre. Each group makes the best kind of contribution to the theatre that it can and any thoughtful person can see that in the long run the efforts of the one group supplement the efforts of the other. One thing is definite, both groups have the same passionate fondness for the object of their common interest. That people from these groups can work together in a collaborative effort for their mutual benefit and the theatre's as well, is demonstrated by the National Theatre Conference's productions of William Saroyan's *Jim Dandy,* Maxwell Anderson's writing of *The Eve of St. Mark* for the University and Little Theatre, and Sawyer Falk's experimental production of Florence Ryerson's and Colin Clement's *Harriet.* Collaborative efforts of this type can and should go further.

Also, we must note that there are those who write and speak about the theatre and those who write for and speak in the theatre. Each group serves its purpose in keeping an interest in the theatre alive.

We have been asked to give a statement of our publication policy. What we say here, consequently, is the result of much more than a casual examination of what other publications are doing in the field.

The *Theatre Annual* is concerned with the purposes and activities of both the professional and academic groups engaged in dramatic activity and study of the theatre. The means by which we join with them is through our interest in those who write for the theatre as well as those who write about the theatre because the *Theatre Annual* is a publication of information and research in the dramatic arts and the history of the theatre. This marks it as of special interest to theatre workers, theatre librarians, and teachers of the dramatic arts and literature. It is by intention essentially their

publication and medium of communication for the transmission of relevant ideas. As such, it should be of particular interest to the student and patron of the theatre as well.

The intentions of the *Theatre Annual* are not journalistic or reportorial. It is hoped that the *Annual* will serve a functional purpose in relation to the theatre and the practice of its arts. In this respect we are particularly interested in the publication of articles from the practicing artists of the theatre and its playwrights, dealing with the actual working details of their creative and practicing techniques.

There is an important reason for this. We know that the association of the younger with the older artists in their work has always been considered an important and invaluable means of development for the younger artists. The older artists hold a great body of unrecorded knowledge accumulated through active experience in their respective arts. In the older theatre this knowledge was passed along through association and by word of mouth. Today, due to the destruction of so much of the potential activity of the theatre, this form of contact has been reduced to a minimum. It is hoped that part of this contact can be re-established through the collection and publication of this type of material, the reading of which will tend to throw light on the practical ways and means of developing and re-developing one's practice in his respective art or craft. It has been indicated that once this intention has been made clear, such materials will be forthcoming. We will do our best to record and preserve them.

It is also hoped that the *Theatre Annual* will definitely mark the coming of age of the theatre arts in the national university and college curriculum by giving the field its own research outlet. It is expected that the *Annual* will open up a new avenue of publication for the advanced student and writer on the arts and history of the theatre that is peculiarly their own.

With these objectives in mind, the *Theatre Annual* has outlined its publication policy. It intends to publish in each issue a number of leading articles, supplemented with good seconds and thirds, on some of the major aspects of the dramatic arts, crafts, and interests, such as acting, directing, scene design, playwriting, criticism, technical problems of production, history of the theatre, theatre collec-

tions, audiences, etc. On occasion the *Annual* will also carry special articles on matters directly related to the theatre.

The possibility of establishing various columns or departments has come in for considerable discussion. One of these is the "Trading Post," of particular interest to theatre librarians or individuals who have theatre items or collections of books and materials that they may wish to sell, exhibit, or exchange and also of concern to those who may wish to examine or buy such items or collections. Another is a column listing new publications or items received; another, a department of book reviews; another, a column to be known as the "Clash of Opinion" or the "Reader's Column" which would allow for the expression of readers' and writers' opinions on particular and general things related to the theatre. Before the *Theatre Annual* goes any further with the materialization of these possibilities, it invites its readers to express their opinions, and interest in these matters.

In respect to the present issue, conceived, more or less, as a popular one, there is only this to say. It has been evident for some time that there is a need for a publication of this type to serve the theatre's arts and history. There has also been much discussion about the establishment of some such publication. The war put an end to most of this but not to all of it. There are some who feel that this war is one essentially to maintain and preserve our culture, and, since they are still able to do a little extra, they have moved to bring the *Annual* into existence under present conditions so that the cultural point involved may be demonstrated. The present issue is a small one, the next may be little larger but it is hoped that they will establish the point involved.

We have also been asked to make a statement on that always electrical subject, drama criticism. Such a statement requires some exposition of the circumstances by which it was established.

The postulation of a point of view in respect to drama criticism has come about not only as a result of our own thinking on the matter but also on the part of some of our practicing critics who have given generously of their time and thought to it. Particularly generous has been Mr. John Anderson, currently president of the New York Drama Critics' Circle.

The examination of what we might do in criticism has been exciting and illuminating, the give and take at times quite lusty and always sporting. The suggestions of what we might do in criticism have been various, running from the idea of a simple yearly review of the New York theatre season to a yearly review of drama criticism under the title of the "Critics' Critic."

Of course the question arose immediately as to who should and who could write such a review of drama criticism and it was always at this point that the fun and excitement began. There was much talk about the super-critic. A note of warning came from some professional theatre people about the danger of undertaking such a venture. Earnestly, the critics said that such a function as the critics' critic should be performed by practicing professionals such as playwrights, producers, and directors. The critics' reason for saying this is their thought that if the other workers in the theatre feel that they at any time have been too severely criticized, the critics should be willing to stand criticism in turn. The critics also maintain that a seasoned, well-developed mind, capable of writing a review of drama criticism, can be found outside the present group of practicing critics. Among the critics themselves the journalistic one says that the academic one should undertake the task, the academic one says the journalistic critic should do it; the intellectually based critic says that the intuitional one should do it, and the intuitionally based critic says the intellectual one is the proper person to do it. Everyone bows earnestly and politely in everyone else's direction; everyone speaks seriously of the great need of such a thing.

From other sources came the suggestion that each year a different practicing critic should take his turn in writing such a review of the season's criticism. Something like a chorus of "Yeas" came from the theatre artists and writers at this suggestion, and added to this affirmative, with some humor at times, was the representation that since the critics criticized everybody else in the theatre, they should be willing to criticize each other as well.

At first, a statement like this seems not to help at all for it brings us flush with the most delicate situation that exists among theatre people. Yet, a further examination of the statement indicates a certain possible line of action we might follow.

In fairness to all concerned it must be said that there have been

times on opening nights when we have felt privileged, because of the bought space we occupied, to sleep with our eyes only apparently open through long reaches of the performances when the critics, because of their professional responsibilities, have been forced to remain awake. On the other hand, we have witnessed occasions when the situation has been entirely the reverse. We will mention one case merely to indicate its type. It is that of a critic discoursing at length about an actor's not having sense enough to oil his squeaking shoes before going into a long, silent, solo scene in which he is to murder himself. Actually, the actor had on felt bedroom slippers and it was the stage that squeaked. He said he did not care much about what the critic said because he did not plan to make acting a permanent career. All he wanted to do was to break the critic's glasses so that he could buy the critic a new pair and an ear-trumpet as well.

Although it is no consolation to the individual involved, particular things such as we have indicated in the one case seem bound to happen on occasion in the theatre, just as we are bound to have bad productions. Doubtless nothing will ever change the emotional situation that develops when criticism coupled directly with play reviewing is negative in its judgment. All that can be done safely in forming a final opinion of the value of any functioning part of the general theatrical scene is to judge the value of such activity in its entirety and over a period of time.

What conditions actually exist when a critic reviews a play must always be kept in mind. After a critic sees a play, he gives his reactions for the benefit of the public so that the public can determine whether it wants to spend its time and money witnessing a performance of the production. That is the first principle of the thing. Anyone who thinks it is not, need only ask the publisher who buys the critic's time and ability. The critic does not make a point of speaking directly to the producer, director, scene designer, or actor on this occasion or for their benefit. If he did, a letter to them personally or a talk with them in the dressing room might serve better.

Play reviewing creates a situation in which the theatre worker is certainly on the receiving end of things because the criticism as well as the artist's work proceeds in public and the artist cannot answer back. The actor stands in the worst position of all because

his work, which sometimes may merely consist in following directions, is all too frequently confused in the public mind with his private personality.

All this being as it may, it still does not seem possible for us to accept the Nazi official edict on first night criticism when Herr Goebbels says, everyone knows that the German actor is doing his best and therefore there is no reason to criticize him. This hamlike quality of thinking on cultural and artistic matters that seems so characteristic of the leaders of *das Herrenvolk* leads to only one conclusion. If you follow its logic, an incompetent and unsuccessful general, wasting men and matériel and failing his objectives, could not be removed from his command, simply because he was doing his best.

Americans in their appreciation of skill and art are essentially perfectionists. Anyone who has been to a professional ball game knows that. Let a runner lag a split-second and be thrown out by a quarter of a stride, let a player muff a grounder or fly at a crucial moment, or an umpire misjudge the path of a ball a quarter of an inch off the plate, and the crowd comes down on the individual like a ton of bricks. This is not because the crowd does not appreciate the effort of the individual. It sees all that. It is howling for perfection in action.

The same qualities of disposition find expression in other situations. About three days after our soldiers broke into Algiers, we were at luncheon with a critic in the midtown section, and on the way down to the subway afterwards, he suggested that we look at the news bulletins in the windows of the *Times* Building. He had seen them at eleven o'clock and it was then about three. He read the bulletins carefully and found nothing new had been added to them since he had last inspected them. After a silence he turned away with the impatient remark, "What's the matter with those boys of ours? Haven't they done anything since eleven o'clock?"

Only one reared in the American scene can understand what the roars and impatience really mean. They are coupled with a fine sense of fair-play and sportsmanship. One must really live the life to know it, and everyone knows that it is only in our rarest moments of frailty that we ever reach a point where we desire to hurt each other.

Yet, any good critic will pick a fight with you if you suggest

that he does not serve an integral function in the life of the theatre. He says he does and he means it. If he does, it is as the arbiter of standards and quality. If he does not, he is just a cheer leader and serves that purpose only. But, if drama criticism does operate as part of the integral machinery of the theatre, it seems that the critic should be willing to maintain, clarify, and enhance by definition, exposition, and constant re-definition, the standards of quality in the theatre. This undoubtedly the critics do in their play reviewing but the value of most of the statement of principle is lost on the theatre worker under the flood of his emotional reaction to the criticism. This would seem to hold whether the reaction is positive or negative.

How to get the critics' statements of principles and values objectively registered remains a question. The first step seems to be to get the statement of principles and values established under conditions which are at least once removed from the immediacy of play reviewing. Certainly there should be some place where theatre workers and critics can meet to consider objectively the critics' standards of quality and value. That theatre people are interested in the question of quality in their work goes without saying. For years we have listened to actors and producers speak of their willingness to forego large salaries and big profits just to work on something worthwhile.

However, if there is any reason why the practicing critics should write in turn a yearly review of drama criticism, it has nothing to do with the attitude that since critics criticize everybody else, they should be willing to criticize each other. The theory behind the idea is that each critic would thus reveal his criteria and state of mind, that is, his principles or motivations in criticism through a process at least once removed from the immediate business of play reviewing. It would seem that such writing, although not necessarily more objective in intention, would be more objectively accepted by the theatre workers because it would not be directed toward their particular efforts and the possible sting or glow in the subjective reaction, that is so often felt by the artist whose livelihood depends upon his efforts, would not be present in considering what the critic has to say.

Whether the objectives sought would be attained through such a procedure remains a question. Theory must be reconciled with

practice and the ways of human nature or it is bad theory. The failure of the American experiment in prohibition exemplifies this. Thus, there seems to be one immediate and basic objection to critics criticizing each other. Simply because an actor is a good actor, it does not follow that he is qualified to criticize the work of other actors, or that one director is qualified to criticize another director. The evidence runs rather to the contrary assumption. In the same way, it is evident that a good drama critic is not, by virtue of his ability alone, necessarily the one to write a review of other critics' criticism. Something else, not something more is needed.

So much then for the popular conception of how a review of drama criticism could be brought into being. Out of a review of all the pros and cons of the consideration, a more important concept comes into the foreground.

The ultimate conception of the Critics' Critic, objectively conceived, that is, stripped of subjectivity and personalities and operating functionally, is of course the "materia critica" of the theatre, a body of principles, practices, and intuitions by which the values of produced plays are judged. It must also be kept in mind that any statement of principles or intuitions set forth by the critic in respect to his work leads directly or indirectly to a critical estimation of his practices. These then are the materials that we are interested in collecting, publishing, and preserving, because a study of them should reveal to the interested professional the mind of the critic and help this theatre person to establish a better sense of direction in his work.

Looking at the field of critical practice, one division heretofore not mentioned appears. There is the individual critic and the institutional critic. The first term needs no explanation, the second perhaps does. In the field of drama criticism are various organizations that perform a critical function through prize-giving. The actions of these institutions, such as the New York Drama Critics' Circle, rest on certain principles and procedures. A study of these institutional activities and purposes should reveal a set of objectives of value to theatre people.

It is with the examination of the institutional critic and with Mr. Anderson's article that we make a start toward the collection of these materials.

Richard Ceough



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WARTIME DRAMA IN CHINA

by

GEORGE TAYLOR

After the first devastating rushes of the Japanese armies which took over the railroads and cities in the north and northwestern parts of China, the Chinese armies and civilian administration were left stranded in the vast reaches between the cities and arterial lines of communication. The military and civilian leaders who emerged before the Japanese had time to consolidate their gains, realized that if they were to organize successful resistance, they would have to resort to guerrilla warfare. But the very organization of guerrilla warfare depended upon the degree to which they could arouse the political consciousness of the people of North China.

In order to accomplish this they had to find a means of organizing the Chinese peasantry in a way that would secure its active sympathy and assistance. Without the help of the peasants, guerrilla warfare simply could not be initiated and carried on. Various efforts to propagandize the army's cause and objectives were undertaken in order to awaken national feeling. Villages were postered, peasants were helped to gather in their crops, speeches were made, etc; but the one instrument that came to the foreground with which the army found it could really accomplish its purpose was the theatre—the Chinese War or Propaganda Theatre.

The conditions existing at that time were not all favorable to those who wanted to organize resistance. On the debit side of the ledger was the fact that the Chinese peasantry knew little or nothing of the Japanese from personal experience, and, actually, could not tell the difference between a Chinese and a Japanese soldier. The peasants' reaction to any type of uniform on the road leading to one of their hinterland villages was the same; it meant only one thing to them—an additional collection of taxes. The Chinese peasant was known to have fled his village at the sight of a Chinese soldier. Furthermore, these peasants were almost entirely illiterate. They were also poor, sustaining themselves on subsistence levels unimaginable to the American mind, and they moved on the assumption that if they did not help the Chinese guerrillas, the Japanese would not harm them.

On the credit side of the ledger, there were certain factors which seem intangible at first. From the standpoint of social justice and humanity, the facts of the case stood in the army's and govern-

ment's favor. First, by blood and tradition these peasants were Chinese; they had the Chinese way of looking at things, and they were not only susceptible to having their conduct influenced by force but it could also be influenced by reason. Second, the atrocious and bloody truth of the Japanese behavior was an undeniable and horrible fact which the army held in its hands as an argument. Third, there was the promise of ultimate protection against the further despoilment of the homes and of the way of life of these natively rational and economically underprivileged farmers if the army's plan to resist the Japanese were accepted.

When the Japanese took over the Chinese cities, they took over the Chinese universities as well. The young Chinese intellectuals in their so-called "Ivory Towers" had to decide either to submit to the Japanese or to leave their "Ivory Towers" and closed in campuses, where no peasant dared tread, and join with the rising forces of resistance. Although the students had played a great part in Chinese politics since the establishment of the republic in 1911—they died by the thousands in the campaign of 1926-1927—they had never been thrown into a situation like this before. They knew that once they had fled from the universities to the countryside their actual existence would depend upon the good will of the peasants. There must have been moments when they wondered whether the peasants would accept them, ignore them, or drive them out. Only a burning cataclysm could have broken down the social barrier between these two groups. The Chinese students joined forces with the people.

Into the students' hands, the army commanders placed their most important, yet unformed and untried, instrument of propaganda—the theatre.

Out of a need born of desperation, this intellectual group had to persuade their own people, whom they hardly knew, to do the impossible. From the traditional social point of view, the line of action they took was undreamed of because, up to this time, theatre people had been classified socially with the lowest classes. The students not only took over the management of the theatre but also went to work in it as playwrights, directors and actors.

They could not have achieved their purpose without furnishing good theatre for no audience can be as critical as the one made up of the humorous, illiterate Chinese peasant with his native dramatic sense, who sits or stands for hours on the hard threshing floor of a village to watch a play. In this new situation, the greater the sense

of danger, the greater the obstacle the playwrights had to overcome, for the army was asking for the co-operation of the peasant, co-operation which would mean contributing food and labor, and even risking death.

There was also something about the farmer's attitude toward the theatre that helped the students. The theatre was an old established institution in which the peasant had found his schooling and escape.

This war theatre does not encourage hero-worship; the heroism it demands of the audience dominates everything. For the actors and the playwrights working in haste and danger there is merely the satisfaction of assuming responsibility in an ever-deepening national movement.

This theatre cannot be understood separate from the composition and nature of the new army. It would never have attracted the audience it did in the beginning had it not been backed by the guerrilla troops which were composed of peasants fresh from the fields and who had been organized and trained by a small group of professional soldiers. At the time I was travelling with them, their political training was much greater than their military training. They were saturated with the contents of lectures, classes, propaganda plays and leaflets; they sang new political songs and were trained to active political action; their uniforms were shabby and their food was inferior even to that of the farmers; they enjoyed no special privileges and they depended upon the farmer for shelter, food, information, guides and labor. They plastered the villages with posters and proclamations, made speeches and helped with the harvest. But the core of their propaganda activity was the theatre and there was always a sprinkling, at least, of these soldiers in every audience.

Thus it came about, through circumstances, tradition and honest action, that the theatre, during a time of bitter national necessity, became one of China's most effective instruments of war which reached, inspired and instructed a vast population over a short period of time on its stake in the war and, also, impelled the people to undertake the tremendous experiment of organized guerrilla resistance against the aggressor. It also prepared them for their part in the New China.

Anyone who has a passing knowledge of the drama knows of the historical materials and forms of the classical Chinese theatre. Perhaps not so much is known of the subsidized attempt and failure to establish the Western theatre in China—an attempt that rose to

gigantic and empty proportions and that died in futility because it was alien to the mind and temperament of the Chinese people.

Yet, what was usable in both these forms of theatre was seized upon by the Chinese students and adapted to their immediate task. Some of the taboos and practices of the classical theatre were done away with. They had no use for the old falsetto singing and the refusal to allow women to appear on the stage; also abolished was the classical-historical material of the traditional theatre and, in its place, present-day material—situations, characters, locales, problems, conditions and attitudes—were made the substance of the plays. In their hands the theatre ceased to be backward looking, an instrument to maintain tradition, but became a breaker of tradition which turned men's eyes to specific problems and to the future.

From the Western theatre the students borrowed its sense of compression and economy in dramatic story telling and what it still retained of the dramatic unities.

The road travelled by this war-propaganda theatre was determined by a somewhat rapid and lively experimentation. An attempt to represent the problems and issues the theatre was to interpret was first made though a venture into allegory which was too far-fetched to be effective. I particularly remember one of these allegorical plays in which one of the principle protagonists appeared as "China Enslaved." The figure was gaunt, dressed in a long black robe and carried measureless chains. Another represented "Liberation" and eventually succeeded in striking the chains from "China Enslaved."

The perceptive Chinese students immediately saw that this species of story telling was too abstract to impinge upon the feelings of, and activate the farmer with his primitive and concrete mind. As a result, this method of dramatic story telling was rapidly discarded. In its place character delineation of the sharpest kind was undertaken. The characters were made to act, look and speak like the principals in the farming villages where the plays were to be performed and the playwrights, as previously mentioned, consciously incorporated in their scripts the locales, problems, conventions and situations of these farming communities. This meant a day to day writing and re-writing of the scripts in order to adjust them to the changing localities. But few plays were written that did not include a Japanese soldier who was ultimately bested by bravery or superior intelligence. However, the playwrights were wise enough to refrain

from attempting to put on the stage anything more than a suggestion of the atrocities that occurred in real life.

I recall a conversation which I had with one of these young Chinese playwrights in the summer of 1938 on the plains of Hopei Province. We were in a village some twenty-five miles from the Japanese-controlled railroad, within striking distance of Japanese motorized columns, and on the edge of "No Man's Land." This playwright was young, bullet-headed and vigorous, with twinkling eyes and a broad firm face. We met two days before one of his plays was scheduled for performance. I asked him when he had written the script. He laughingly replied that it had not yet been finished.

That a certain amount of extemporizing and enlarging of speeches or ad libbing which used to characterize some of the stock company performances I witnessed in my boyhood is the order of the day in this new Chinese theatre goes without saying. In fact, this extemporizing is encouraged by the playwright who is almost certain to appear during the performance of his play as director or as an actor.

One most important feature in the method of production in this new Chinese theatre should be noted. There is a definite and consistent effort made to involve the audience directly in the dramatic action of the play. At a certain spot in the performance, when a particular point has been made, a representative of the government or of the military authority comes to the front of the stage and declares a sentiment or asks a leading question of the audience which forces it to take sides. The audience's reaction is almost inevitably expressed orally.

Certain elements of lesser importance have been retained in the method of production in order to make the audience feel at home by not destroying its sense of convention and tradition. We still find important personages sitting on stage and the stage manager coming on and changing the props and scenery during the performance.

The evening following the day I met the playwright with the unfinished script, I went to see the opening performance of his play. I was taken by the guerrillas to an open space on the edge of the village. Houses lined two sides of the area and the rest merged into fields. Thick bamboo poles supported a stage about ten feet from the ground. Over this, was a roof of matting and a backdrop of the same material. A single entrance to the stage, upper left,

was an open space the size of an ordinary door. Behind the backdrop projected about six or seven feet of platform, just enough room for the actors to await their turn. The audience of about two hundred peasants sat tailor-fashion on the hard-beaten, dusty ground. The faces were those of any Chinese village crowd—wrinkled, weatherbeaten old men, young and vigorous peasants with short-cropped hair, children of all ages, but few women. They were patient, undemanding, shrewd, quick to laughter, and equally ready to let their tears run unashamedly. This was not, I felt, an easy crowd to handle.

The play was to follow several political speeches. As these were coming to a close, rain began to fall and I naturally assumed that the play would not be put on. One of the guerrilla leaders, formerly a student in Peiping, told the crowd that the play would be postponed until the morrow, but the crowd overruled him and demanded its entertainment. The rain beat down on audience and actors alike, for the matting roof over the stage did not long serve as protection. I was invited to remain on the stage with several of the guerrilla leaders to watch the play, but I preferred to stand at the edge of the crowd. The play began. Two men brought in a table and chair in full view of the audience, for there was no scenery, no lighting, no curtains. The actors represented two peasants who sat across from each other at the table and immediately began a long but lively discussion. After discussing current events of the village they moved on easily into talk of the war, expressing the attitudes known to be held by the audience—that peasants could do nothing to stop the Japanese. Should the Japanese come to their village, there was nothing to be done but accept their fate. To peasants who had never seen a tractor or an automobile, the tanks and artillery of the Japanese had become almost legendary. Easily persuaded by arguments which were its own, the audience nodded and grunted agreement, and was fascinated by the liveliness and vehemence of the conversation.

Into this discussion came a third man who disagreed with the views of the other two peasants, and argued that something could be done about the Japanese if people organized themselves to resist. The daughter of one of the peasants came in and took the side of this man who was explaining the philosophy of guerrilla warfare. When the father and his friend were beginning to lose the argument, a political officer of the guerrillas took the center of the stage and shouted, "Down with Japanese imperialism!" The audience re-

sponded in a perfunctory, lukewarm fashion. He retired. There followed scenes in which the Japanese soldier, quartered in the house of the father, attacked the daughter. To the horror of her father, the daughter resisted. At this point the political officer repeated his appeal, "Down with Japanese imperialism!" and the response was vigorous. Finally the daughter managed to kill the drunken soldier, and the audience having now fully identified itself with the actions of the girl, shouted in triumph. It was now ready to believe anything, including the continuing discussions on the stage on the way in which the Japanese could be opposed by unarmed peasants.

This outline does not do justice to the plot, characterization and the acting of the play. With brilliant simplicity, a village of peasants who had never seen a Japanese or heard of the guerrilla movement was given the key idea which made guerrilla resistance possible. The play had driven a wedge into the thinking of the village and created a mood which could be exploited with other techniques.

These peasants had not watched, they had taken part in the play. For this was a dramatization of what was happening in nearby villages, a re-telling of things of which many of them had heard. With the actors they lived through all their own fears and doubts, for the whole thing was on their own emotional and intellectual level; in two hours they crystallized a picture of the nature of the enemy, they felt the terror of his nearness and the futility of considering compromise. They joined openly in the melodramatic struggle between the Chinese girl and the Japanese soldier, if one could call it melodrama when it was in reality an understatement of things which were happening that night all over China. They could not have left the play without a new sense of oneness with their neighbors and a glimmering of how personal and group decisions could affect the course of the war. Even a foreign observer could not resist the appeal.

The direction taken by the Chinese War Theatre is not unique; the same characteristics and trends appear in the general Chinese theatre.

When the Japanese besieged and conquered the eastern cities of China, the theatre people there were faced with a dilemma similar to that which confronted the young intelligentsia. The theatre people, too, gave up everything they had and embraced the national cause.

For them, likewise, the drama became an accepted propaganda

medium. Those with the traditional Chinese point of view, felt that this result was accomplished, all too often, at the expense of the classical conception of the literary quality of the Chinese drama. But, this break with tradition, born of the need and desire to communicate with the Chinese people in every walk of life on an immediate and vital problem, was successfully accomplished. Doubtless, some of those who complained about the qualities of the new theatre were in the same state of mind as were those who complained that the Western theatre was going to the dogs when such playwrights as Ibsen, Shaw and O'Neill first appeared on the scene. In any event, there was a continual demand for more and more plays and a tremendous number of them, particularly of the new type, were produced during the first year of the war (1937-1938).

Thus out of the bitter necessity of war not only did the theatre become an effective weapon against the Japanese, but out of this bitter necessity a new theatric art form, the "New Chinese Theatre," realistic in form and manner, modern in viewpoint and material, and more often than not functional in design, was born.

No doubt there are things about this new theatre that can be made subject to passing criticism. Its plays are, perhaps, at times, still, too long, often being set up in four or five acts and taking four to five hours to perform. One may also complain, on occasion, that there is too much dialogue. These things are incidental and can be adjusted as the new theatre carries on. The fundamental fact is that the "New Chinese Theatre" has come to stay and that it has become at least as important in Chinese life as the Classical Chinese Theatre.

The greatest handicaps the Chinese theatre workers face are a shortage of stage materials and a lack of proper housing. Notwithstanding, the settings of recently produced plays, due to the ingenuity of those who staged them, have proved amazingly effective.

Another great handicap is the lack of large theatres. Chungking, for instance, has only five or six theatres available for modern dramatic performances. Their total seating capacity is only a little over five thousand. Some of these theatres show moving pictures and are not always available for the performance of plays.

Nevertheless the total number of plays written in China during the last six years is estimated at nearly one thousand. In the six years before 1937 less than five hundred were written. In the ten years preceding Japan's attack on Mukden in September, 1931, about two hundred plays were written. Of those written during

the war years, 25 percent deal directly with the war and 15 percent deal with anti-traitor activities; about 13 percent describe conditions in occupied areas, 15 percent are historical plays, and about 10 percent are translations or adaptations of such plays as Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Eugene O'Neill's *Horizon* and Tolstoy's *Resurrection.*

When the war spread to the Shanghai area in the spring of 1938, such noted playwrights as Hung Sheng, Ma Yen-hsiang and Yin Yun-wei individually headed a troupe to work among the troops and the people in the war areas while other dramatists, particularly, Tien Han, Ou Yang Yu-chien and Hsiung Fuhsi, organized playing companies in the interior cities. This type of organizational activity reached its greatest development during the defence of Hankow in the summer of 1938. With the fall of Hankow, Chinese theatre people, with the other sections of the population, began their exodus toward the western part and interior of China where they eventually gathered in the four major centers—Chungking and Chengtu in Szechwan, Sian in the Northwest and Kweilin in the Southwest. The reorganized and transplanted theatre, however, suffered serious setbacks as the result of intensive Japanese bombings of these cities in 1939. By wintertime of that year only a few of the largest dramatic organizations with strong financial backing had weathered the attacks. Some of these finally had to rely, solely, on box office receipts to survive. The price of tickets went up and it became difficult for people of small means to attend the theatre.

During the 1937-1938 season the new plays dealt mostly with the treacherous activities of traitors, with eventual death for them at the hands of patriots; the suffering of the people under enemy rule, and the defeat of the enemy by heroic Chinese defenders. The choice of subject matter seemed to follow an almost automatic limitation during this period and, in retrospect, much of the writing appears to have been inferior, and the plots and characterizations trite. It was the period, however, in which the theatre first began to go to the countryside and street corners for an audience.

During the period which might be characterized as that of the Exodus or Western Trek (1938-1939), the most common themes dealt with exposures of evils in Chinese life, the portrayal of Japanese atrocities and the activities of puppets. Plays with historical themes were also written and older plays re-written and produced.

The victory of Taierhchuang gave rise to a confidence in final victory. This stimulated the playwrights. They settled down and

began to take more time for the writing of their plays, drawing on their experiences at the front and behind the lines for inspiration. The plays fell into three general categories; those describing conditions in the occupied regions; those recalling successful activities against the enemy in the past, and those presenting wartime problems in the rear.

Sung Cheh-ti's *The State Comes First* and Lao She's *Fabian Mist* and Tsao Yu's *Transformation* are all representative works of this period. *Transformation* was the best of these plays. It dealt with the resistance in China as an incentive to social reform. Last winter (1943) it ran for thirty nights in Chungking and aroused nationwide attention. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information have suggested that public and private organizations throughout China, including schools, stage this play as a means of educating the people and the younger Chinese. Besides showing the people a bright future in store for China this play presents a group of characters, typical in wartime China.

In the third year of the war (1939-1940), historical themes received some further consideration from professional Chinese playwrights. The themes and characters indicated by the following examples are characteristic: Kuichiav's *Yueh Fei* (a general in the Sung Dynasty who fought the Tartars), Kuo Mu-jo's *Chih Tsi-kuang* (a general in the Ming Dynasty who routed the invading Japanese along China's eastern coast) and Wu Tsu-kuang's *The Song of Righteousness* (the story of the famous Sung Dynasty patriot, Wen Tien-hsiang).

The 1942-1943 theatre season again marked a turn in the themes of this new Chinese drama. The new plays deal with the uprooting of old evils in Chinese life, the creation of a new spirit necessary for the winning of the war, and clinching the success in national reconstruction.

Chinese wartime drama, though essentially realistic and deficient in traditional Chinese writing technique, shows us that its playwrights have ceased being mere naturalistic onlookers of life and are engaged in presenting a mirror to the public from which all the irrational phenomena of Chinese life are reflected, and a better way of life shown.

A brief analysis of a few of the wartime plays is presented here to throw some further light on their substance.

Lay Down Your Whip is a drama directed against the feudal backwardness that plays into the hands of the Japanese aggressors.

Storm Over Mongolia describes Japanese attempts at penetration by a "divide-and-rule" policy among religious and secular groups. *Crossing the Yellow River* is a satire on shopkeepers and local gentry who think only of saving their own skins in a time of national crisis.

This last play portrays, with humor, the short-sighted wine merchant who has an unwonted burst of generosity when a false alarm credits the Japanese with having crossed the Yellow River. He treats all his friends until his wine shop is empty and wipes all debts from his account board. When authentic reports indicate that the Japanese troops are still far away, he is left in Lear-like despair. Another unforgettable character in the play is the decrepit squire who thinks that spouting Confucian quotations will spirit bombs away, but is the first to hide behind the counter when the Japanese are reported to be approaching. His friends finally drag him out of hiding and frighten him almost to death by poking a feather, which he thinks is a bayonet, into his ribs.

Three Rivers, a one-act play, is the nickname of a guerrilla organizer who is nearly captured by puppet police under Japanese control. Although in the shadow of death and with a prize on his head, Three Rivers persuades the police officer to join the guerrillas and fight the Japanese instead of serving them reluctantly. A bamboo rattle in a scene of the play syncopates a dramatic dialogue in which the fate of not only one man, but also of a whole people, is decided. The play shows how the people's attitude changes from one of hopeless defeatism to one of a desire to work in order to resist the forces of oppression.

An Air Hero's Death tells the story of a young Chinese aviator who, after receiving injuries in a dog fight with Japanese planes, is rushed to a hospital where his fiancée, a poetess, and her girl friend are nursing the wounded soldiers. He dies before a blood transfusion, volunteered by his fiancée can be effected.

The story of how a man can love his country more than his own daughter is woven into a play entitled *Ma, a Chinese Volunteer Leader.* Ma, held captive by Gengi Kobayashi, a Japanese officer in North China, causes his own daughter, also a volunteer fighter unfortunately fallen into the enemy's hands, to be poisoned rather than to be tortured and forced to disclose secrets concerning an underpass which Ma, himself, had designed for concealing volunteer activities in the Japanese-occupied areas. Ma, failing to confess anything, is cold-bloodedly killed by the disappointed Japanese.

The killing of her husband, her mother and her son by Japanese

soldiers and her colorful vengeance upon them by a Chinese woman is the theme of the play, *A Chinese Woman's Revenge*. The action of this play takes place in a small farmhouse in Hopei which was broken into by a number of Japanese soldiers, led by a Chinese traitor, Wang. All the members of her family have been killed, leaving her to comfort the intruders. The farm woman, pretending to yield herself to her foes, offers them food and wine. At midnight, when they are drunk and sleeping on the earthen floor, she chops off the heads of three of them with a scythe and shoots the other four with a rifle. Wang, is also killed before he realizes what is happening.

One of the most stirring plays written since the war began dramatizes the famous episodes of the Joint Savings Godown in Chapei during the seige of Shanghai. Employing the popular title, *The Lone Battalion,* the dramatist shows the hopelessness of the Battalion's position, the prospect of certain annihilation, the Battalion's unfaltering devotion to duty, the writing of farewell letters, and the intensity of Japanese bombardment.

The heroine's part is built around the gallantry of the Chinese girl guide who, defying the Japanese soldiers, crosses the Soochow Creek from Shanghai and presents the battalion commander with a huge Chinese flag. This flag is seen by thousands of the citizens of Shanghai the next morning, flying proudly in the breeze from the tops of the godown.

Final Victory, a title taken from China's war slogan, shows wartime conditions in a Chinese village. The central story is of Pao Sheng, a soldier, who is captured and condemned to death by the Japanese. He discusses the problems of war with his assigned Chinese executioner and the result is that, when the time comes for his execution, the executioner shakes hands with him saying that he would rather die than serve the Japanese war lords. He frees Pao Sheng because of his value to the cause, helps him to escape and, thereafter, shoots himself rather than fall into the hands of the Japanese.

It must not be presumed that the Chinese people have lost all interest in the classical plays. This interest remains apparently as ours does, for the Shakespeares and the Gilbert and Sullivans. They are people particularly interested in the Kun Chu (Flute Plays), the Pi Huang (Musical Plays of Peiping) and other regional plays. Chinese dramatists are improving them by giving them up-to-date interpretations. Tien Han, veteran Chinese playwright, is particu-

larly interested in the "Reformed Plays." He has written a number of the Peiping Musical Plays and is making a series of readjustments in presenting the Kwangsi Plays. The "Reformed Plays" retain their old forms and music but have new content. In Chungking, during the 1942-1943 season, *Behind the Manchu Throne* by Yang Tsun-pin, picturing the misrule under the Manchu Empress Dowager, ran for thirty full house performances. Note its theme.

Hundreds of thousands of people are going to the theatre in China. During the 1942-1943 season in Chungking, 250,000 persons went to the 313 performances of 20 plays. *Fascist Bacteria* by Hsia Yen was the curtain raiser for the year. The last play of the season was *Home* by Tsao Yu, adapted from the well-known novel by Pa Chin. Six of the season's plays dealt directly with the war or had the war for a background.

It has been estimated that, since the war began, no less than one thousand producing organizations have been formed in China and about half of them are still active. A dozen of the best ones are in Chungking. These organizations fall into two categories; those that are government organized and subsidized, and the professional groups. Among the professional groups, the largest is the Chinese Dramatic Arts Company, headed by Yin Yun-wei. It has on its staff such playwrights and directors as Chen Po-cheng, Chang Chun-hsiang and Ho Meng-fu. Another well-known organization is the China Arts and Drama Society formed only a few months ago. It is headed by Shin Shan, the popular actor and director.

The two largest government-supported dramatic organizations are the Long Live China Dramatic Corps of the China Motion Picture Corporation and the Dramatic Corps of the Central Motion Picture Studio. As film is scarce and expensive, actors and actresses in the two motion picture studios give stage performances when not busy making pictures. They not only perform in Chungking but visit other cities, particularly during the summer months when the bombing of the wartime capital makes dramatic production almost impossible. Another government-supported dramatic corps is the Central Youth Dramatic Society of the Kuomintang Youth Corps. This organization is headed by Ma Yen-hsiang. It has about 200 branches in various Chinese cities.

Travelling companies are constantly working throughout the country. In addition to those organized by various army units, schools, public organizations and the people themselves, the Ministry of Education has sent out several road units to the countryside. The

Political Training Board of the National Military Council directs dramatic work in the army, having several travelling companies at the front. The contents of the plays staged by these road units vary a great deal depending upon conditions prevailing in different places. The form of presentation includes dramatized news reports and lectures, one-act plays and one-man shows presented at street corners, at tea houses and in any other place where an audience may be gathered.

The playwrights of China were organized under one banner in January, 1938, when the Nationalist Dramatists Anti-Aggression Association was created. At that time the respective exponents of the classical and new drama joined hands in hearty co-operation. The Association is headed by Chang Tao-fan, former vice-Minister of Education and Minister of Information and now Minister of the Central Overseas Affairs Board, who is a playwright in his own right.

The government has adopted measures to protect the rights of Chinese dramatists, such as their right to collect royalties. It encourages them by giving prizes to good plays. For the training of the theatre artists, the Ministry of Education has established the National Academy of Dramatic Arts and the National Musical Drama School. The National Academy of Dramatic Arts, founded in 1935 by Minister Chang Tao-fan is headed by Yui Shang-yuen. It has three departments: Vernacular Drama, Musical Drama and Advanced Professional Vernacular Drama. In the five-year course, the students are taught Greek tragedies, Shakespeare, Ibsen and the works of other western playwrights, and the techniques of famous actors and actresses in addition to regular courses in the dramatic arts. As the first modern drama school in China, the Academy was located in Nanking before the outbreak of the war. It is now in Kiangan, Szechwan, and has a dramatic society that gives performances from time to time by way of practice. Last winter (1943) it staged Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in Chungking with considerable success. The play was translated into Chinese by Liang Shih-chiu, a famous Chinese writer, and directed by Professor Hsiao Chu-yin of the Academy. About 600 persons have graduated from the Academy; nearly 60 percent of China's well-established actors and actresses were students there.

The National Musical Drama School was formerly known as the National Experimental Dramatic School. It is now in Peipei, north of Chungking, headed by Wang Pe-sheng, a noted singer of the Musical Plays of Peiping. Modern musical drama is still young in

China and efforts are being made to promote not only Chinese singing, but western style opera as well.

The outstanding features of China's wartime drama may be summarized in five points. First, both classical and modern plays have been drawing their inspiration from events which help awaken the national consciousness of the people. Second, the numbers of playwrights, directors, players and other dramatic workers have increased since the outbreak of war. It is estimated that China has no less than 200,000 people engaged in the theatre's various activities. The Chinese theatre has done anything but succumb to the exigencies of war. Third, outdoor and mass performances have grown increasingly popular. Street plays seem particularly fit for wartime propaganda purposes. Fourth, government encouragement has helped the growth of the "New Chinese Theatre." The educational and propaganda value of drama has been universally recognized. Fifth, the new drama of China has assumed at least an equal artistic importance in the minds and lives of the Chinese people as the classical drama.

A DEFENCE OF THE PROFESSIONAL REVIEWER

by

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

If the Man from Mars should ever actually make his long expected visit to our earth, nothing would puzzle him more than the continued toleration accorded to various occupations and institutions which seem to be universally condemned. Very few things—and almost no "good things"—have ever been said in favor of marriage or the professions of law and medicine. Yet century after century men continue to get married and doctors and lawyers are not only permitted to exist but actually are paid—rather well, at that—by the very people who have exposed their essentially pernicious activity.

The existence of professional critics of literature and the theatre affords, as the Man from Mars would discover, a minor but very extreme example of the same paradox. In the English-speaking world, literary criticism has been a paying trade for about two hundred and fifty years; play reviewing for a somewhat shorter period—for though "the critics" begin to be contemptuously referred to toward the end of the Seventeenth Century, the reference then

was to amateurs, and plays were not regularly reviewed in periodicals until about a century later. Yet, during all this time, few words have been said in favor of critics of any kind. As nearly everyone knows, Dryden first embodied in words one standard reproach against them when he defined a critic as something generated out of the corruption of a poet. The friends of Samuel Johnson were already questioning the right of any man who could not compose a tragedy, to presume to criticize one, and the play reviewer had no sooner appeared than playwright, producer and spectator agreed in referring to him in terms of bottomless contempt. Nevertheless, the play reviewer persisted and flourished. He outgrew shame-faced anonymity; he became increasingly prosperous despite contempt, and on the newspapers of today he is not only one of the most highly paid members of the staff but also one of the comparatively few who are deliberately publicized by their employers. With the critic's enthusiastic consent, the dramatic editor working under him, devotes considerable space to the protests against, and the denunciations of, critics in general as well as of his critic in particular, which pour in from actors, playwrights, producers, and the public.

Various charges are perennially leveled against him. Nowadays he is seldom accused of being open to bribery, but he is periodically denounced as too blasé to recognize merit when he sees it, too frivolous to appreciate anything except light entertainment, and so anxious to show off that he gladly sacrifices fairness to epigram. Yet these charges, grave as they are, are not the most fundamental. A good play reviewer might, in theory at least, avoid all of them. Fundamentally, most protesters imply a doubt that there is any such thing as a good critic of plays. His trade, so it seems to them, involves a double impertinence. He tells his betters (the authors and the actors) what they should do and he tells his equals (the spectators) what they should like. Why, they unite in asking, should they stand for it? If critics do not like a certain play and a certain production why don't the critics write a better one and act in it themselves?

Yet it is these same people who enable the critic to continue to draw pay for his impertinence. The managers send him tickets. The spectators buy the papers in which his "worthless opinions" are set forth. After an opening night, most of those concerned with the new production sit up until dawn waiting for the first editions, and if the "worthless opinion" happens to be favorable, it reappears within a few hours in the form of a gigantic photographic enlarge-

ment outside the lobby of the theatre in which the play was produced. Even the law joins the curious conspiracy to encourage the critic in his arrogance by protecting his right to express commercially damaging opinions (which are demonstrably no more than opinions) despite the fact that any similar criticism of almost any other product offered for sale would bring a prompt and successful suit for damages.

As I understand it, the legal theory is, that when a producer sends the critics a free ticket he invites an opinion and thus forfeits any right to protest. From time to time exasperated producers have refused to send certain individual critics their usual tickets and have even attempted (unsuccessfully in recent years, though a test case is still before the courts) to refuse to sell them admissions. But so far as I am aware, no one has ever tried the really interesting experiment of bringing a suit for damages against a critic, who has bought rather than been given a ticket, based upon his expressed opinion which is commercially damaging but which cannot be supported by objectively verifiable facts.

Probably no responsible manager will ever make that experiment —for fear that it might be successful. No responsible manager, in other words, would really like to see the profession of drama critic abolished because, whatever his opinion of the competence of critics in general, he knows that once newspapers and magazines stopped taking it for granted that plays must be reviewed and news of the theatre presented, a considerable portion of the public would almost simultaneously stop taking it for granted that "sophisticated" people cannot continue to qualify as "sophisticated" unless they have seen and can discuss the latest theatrical productions. He knows, further, that as things now go, no inconsiderable part of his prosperity depends upon this general assumption that the theatre is part of sophisticated metropolitan life.

Thus, the paradox involved in the fact that constantly irritated managers continue to tolerate the critics may be resolved without any real defence of the critic himself. Even were he as impertinent and as incompetent as he is frequently held to be, he would still be useful to the theatrical entrepreneur. But the case of the general public is somewhat different. It obviously does not really resent the critic as unreservedly as it thinks that it does. Would it be possible, one wonders, to describe his function in terms acceptable to his audience?

One must begin by assuming that criticism, in the highest sense

of the term, is bound to constitute, at best, only a small portion of all the writing which any professional critic publishes. If by such criticism we mean profound generalizations concerning works of permanent artistic value, then no man ever lived who was capable of producing it in sufficient quantity to earn himself a livelihood as a working journalist; and if such a hitherto unparalleled genius were to appear, he would not find in the course of the best theatrical seasons very many opportunities to exhibit his powers. If, even, within the limits of any drama critic's ability, he were to attempt to try each new offering by the highest artistic standards; if he were to resolve to view everything from the aspect of eternity; to call nothing good which was not absolutely so; then, masterpieces being rare as they are, it is obvious that he might pass his whole professional life without once deviating from an invariable judgment which would read "By the standards which Sophocles, Shakespeare and Molière have established—even by the standards set by Ibsen and Shaw—this play is a failure."

That he does nothing of the sort and that not one of his readers expects him to, is evidence enough that a tacit understanding exists. "Good," "bad," even "great," are used relatively. The reviewer means, and is understood to mean, "relative to the standards set by the prevailing level of the dramatic and theatrical art." If he is a good reviewer, he occasionally reminds his readers and himself that this tacit understanding does exist and he makes some attempt to estimate just how low or how high the assumed standards are; but this is the material for an occasional essay, not something which needs to be or could be repeated every time an interesting drama or an amusing comedy makes its appearance.

Discuss with any working drama critic his theory or his practice, and you will find him very soon making some distinction between the routine reviews and "my Sunday piece." That does not mean, usually at least, that he considers even this Sunday piece criticism for the ages, but it does mean that he takes pleasure in distinguishing between the perspective appropriate to a weekly as opposed to a daily judgment, and that he thinks of a review as something essentially different in its nature from even the informal critical essay.

To say this, however, is not to imply that reviewing is merely irresponsible criticism. The so-called drama critic is, most of the time, a reviewer rather than a critic; and it is only as a reviewer that he can, as a rule, usefully employ his talents, however great they may be. The real justification for his existence lies in a proper

understanding of the nature of reviewing rather than in any consideration of criticism in the more exalted and formal sense. That a reviewer may occasionally write such criticism is beside the point. Others may write it also, and at best the professional reviewer will not and cannot write it often enough to make it the activity for which his magazine or newspaper pays him a living wage. But he can and often does make of reviewing a useful and difficult art with aims and principles of its own. And it is as reviewer that he finds a public large enough to give him his important place on the staff of the publication which employs him.

What, then, is good reviewing and what is the task to which a good reviewer sets himself? Extremists have sometimes maintained that good reviewing is merely good reporting. On occasion they have gone so far as to deny the reviewer the right to any opinions or judgments of his own and have urged him to limit himself to a detached account of what happens in the play plus a report on the reaction of the audience. That, of course, would be a preposterous program, but a new play *is* new, it *is* something which most of the reviewer's readers know nothing about when they begin to read his piece and that fact, by making it necessary for him to be a reporter among other things, establishes immediately one of the fundamental differences between the good review and the good critical essay. The latter normally assumes that the reader is familiar with the work about to be criticized, that he is in possession of all the obvious facts, and that the critic's judgments or interpretations can begin at the level where he is aware of insights not assumed to be necessarily shared by every ordinarily competent reader. The reviewer, on the other hand, can assume nothing of the sort. He cannot pass a convincing judgment nor undertake any sort of criticism, properly so called, until he has given the reader a working equivalent of the experience which is to be interpreted and judged. In all, he will have a thousand, or fifteen hundred words at most, for his review and of these he will have available for any kind of criticism only those left over after he has told the reader what it is that he is criticizing.

Obviously the preliminary task is formidable. In a few hundred words the reviewer must manage to convey the effect of a play lasting two hours and a half. The reader will expect no less since he turns to the review first of all, not because he will accept without question the yes or no of the reviewer, but because he expects to judge for himself, on the basis of the account, whether or not the

play is one which he wants to see. The reviewer can aim at no less, not only because he must give the reader what the reader expects, but also because, if the reader is to pass an intelligent judgment, he must be in possession of something which will take the place of a direct experience with the play being reviewed.

No mere summary of the plot or statement of the theme will do. A fair summary of *Hamlet* can, as Voltaire proved, make it seem like one of the most preposterous dramatic compositions ever offered any public. Not an account, but an equivalent, of the spectator's experience must be presented, and to do that the reviewer must practice, not reporting, but the art of re-creating in descriptive terms the effect of a narrative. That particular art is essentially the one used and abused by certain nineteenth-century writers who undertook to present "the adventures of the soul among the masterpieces." It has more recently fallen into disrepute as a method of criticism and has been described by T. S. Eliot, in his lofty way, as the result, not of a genuinely critical impulse, but of a "weak creative impulse." Perhaps Mr. Eliot is right. But however unacceptable as a method of criticism in the most exalted sense of the term, it is a *sine qua non* of really good reviewing since the reviewer, though not merely a reporter of the external circumstances of a new play and of its reception by the public, must nevertheless be first of all a reporter of aesthetic experiences. In so far as every such experience is personal and not identical with the experience of any other spectator, the reporter is also an interpreter and a champion of the justness of his own reactions. But only in so far as he is convincing, only in so far as he succeeds in making the reader assume that he would have reacted in substantially the same manner, will the reviewer either be accepted as a guide or become capable of rendering significant any genuinely critical observations which he may finally get around to making.

No two reviewers go about the accomplishment of this very special and highly difficult task in the same way, but every first-class review is like every other in at least this one respect: every sentence contributes not only its obvious content but also something toward the creation of an atmosphere from which the mood of the reviewer and, by implication therefore, the effect of the play under discussion, is communicated to the reader. Once it has been decided how much or how little of the plot must be told (and that may vary from almost all to almost nothing) then that much must be recounted in such a way as to suggest, at the same time, its effective-

ness or ineffectiveness, its logic or its lack of logic, its novelty or its staleness. And so with every other aspect of the whole which is reported—for what must always be given is not merely the fact but the effect of the fact. One must not recount a plot and then say that it is strong. One must manage somehow to make the strength apparent, and one must also do even more difficult things, especially since one's space is limited. One must catch and reflect in one's own manner the weightiness of the tragedy or the insouciance of the comedy. Since only if one does so, will the reader catch, as he must if the review is to be successful, his indirect glimpse of what the experience of witnessing that performance would be like. Thus it is only after he has, in these various indirect ways, been put into some sort of possession of the work itself that he can profit from any genuinely critical observations which the reviewer may have it in him to make.

An ideal review contains, then, at least three things, essentially distinct things, though ordinarily they are so mingled that the reader is hardly aware that they are distinct. Such a review is, first of all, a report of an item of news—such and such a play, by such and such an author, was first performed at a certain theatre with a certain cast and deals, tragically or comically or farcically, with certain situations. With this news report—this simple account—is mingled an impressionistic re-creation of the work itself, complete enough to entertain and to convince a reader. Complete enough, also, to make possible the final element, namely, a judgment based upon whatever genuinely critical convictions the reviewer may have relevant to the play under discussion.

Such a piece of writing, whether the genre which it constitutes be an important or an unimportant one, is obviously of a specialized sort. It constitutes a relatively new form and it has been to an extraordinary extent so taken for granted that it has seldom been analyzed or even recognized for the distinct thing which it is. Nearly every playgoer assumes that he would make a good reviewer, and of the dozens of young men who have consulted me concerning the possibility of entering the profession, not one has ever assumed that any special ability or experience was necessary or that his problem involved anything beyond the question of how one went about getting a job which anyone could fill and a great many people would like to have. Yet, as Max Beerbohm once remarked, "Theatrical reminiscence is the most terrible weapon in the armory of age," and there are few people who have not suffered that torture,

which is usually the only result of the attempt on the part of most non-professionals, old or young, to tell their friends about the wonderful play they have just seen. A reviewer, whether he is a good critic or not, must at the very least find willing listeners while he discourses on a topic nearly everybody likes to talk about but almost nobody likes to hear discussed by his friends.

That the professional reviewer wields an enormous immediate and practical influence is plain enough from the growing tendency of managers to close, at once, any production which has received generally unfavorable notices. To what extent reviewers have influenced for good or ill the general development of playwriting during the last decade or so, it would be difficult to judge. Comparatively few have made themselves crusaders, as Shaw did in the Eighteen Nineties, and their influence has for the most part been hard to measure. None has evolved a *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* in the course of his reviewing; many have set an example of intelligent and enlightened commentary which has probably imperceptibly moulded the taste of the average theatregoer to a considerably greater extent than he is aware. And it ought to be remembered that the narrowly crusading critic, however important the function he may perform, is a bad reviewer—as Shaw frankly admitted of himself in the preface to his *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*.

I prefer to rest the defence of my colleagues and of myself on our practice of the art of reviewing as I have attempted to describe that art. I doubt that we have actually done much to assist our leading playwrights to find themselves. On the other hand, our record has, I think, been pretty good so far as our ability to recognize and applaud important talents as they have appeared is concerned. And by giving the theatregoing public reviews which it found interesting, I think we have probably helped to find an audience for those playwrights whom we have not called into being and probably not greatly aided in the solution of their own artistic problems.

NOTES ON JASON*

by

SAMSON RAPHAELSON

After *The Jazz Singer* and *Accent on Youth,* I swore I'd never write another play with the theatre as a background. In fact, I was through with artists of any breed as characters. So after an interlude containing *White Man* (a negro tragedy about an architect—an architect is a kind of business man, see?) and *Skylark* (a comedy about an advertising executive—advertising is an industry isn't it? *everybody* knows at least one advertising man), I wrote *Jason,* a play about a dramatic critic, two other dramatic critics, and a playwright.

I don't know how this happened, but my story is that it happened accidentally, and I have documentary evidence in some six or seven hundred pages of notes which amount to at least four other complete plays.

It started with my saying to my wife one evening that I learned a lot from her about our two children—Joel, then twelve, and Naomi, then ten. How about a play, I said, about what I learned? We'll get two real kids into it—most kids in plays are quaint little fellas. But the kids we know, including our own, are intelligent, straightforward, dignified. And quaint, my wife added. All right, I said, but we don't lean on that in the play—we write them straight, and let audiences vulgarize them, if they will, the way they vulgarized *Tobacco Road.*

What am *I,* said my wife—the heroine? You're the heroine, I said, and the kids are great, and I, the father, am a stuffed shirt. I think I am strong—I lay down the law—but I don't really know anything about life. Oh Lord, said my wife, don't tell me you're a *writer.* I'm positively not a writer, I said. I'm a kind of—of professor, maybe. Say a professor of English Literature, pretty righteous, humorous, but from books—a maker of classroom jokes. In the first act, you're in awe of me; so are the kids. The thing comes to a climax about some little thing—maybe like the time when our kids both were roaring over that bum joke in the funnies and I couldn't see what they were laughing at and I gave them that rather pompous little essay on humor. We take something like that—and it becomes a real issue and climax in the kids' life. You,

* *Jason,* a comedy by Mr. Raphaelson, was produced at the Hudson Theatre in New York City on January 21, 1942. The play has been published by Random House (New York) and can be found in Burns Mantle's *Best Plays of 1941-1942.* EDITORS NOTE.

who gave up a career to marry me—(not an actress's career, for Heaven's sake, cried my wife)—let's say your were an assistant buyer in a department store—(thank you, said my wife)—you begin to feel the cramped spiritual atmosphere. That's Act One.

In Act Two the thing comes to a head. The boy is rebellious—he defies me. You're still in awe of me, and you don't quite know what to do, because I have sold you the idea that I am a deep thinker and a great man. The boy announces that he's going to leave home. I look him over coldly and I say, all right, go ahead. The girl says she's going, too. I say fine. They walk out. You and I are alone on the stage. I say, they'll be back—but perhaps you'd better follow them, half a block behind, and if they go beyond the boulevard crossing, pick them up and bring them back. You say, I'll follow them—and if they go beyond the boulevard crossing, I'll join them and I'll go on with them. I stare at you. You go. Curtain.

The third act is six months later. You have taken a little house with the kids. I am obstinate—I live alone. But the light is out of my life. I finally call on you and ask the three of you to come back. You say, it's up to the kids. I turn to them, and I ask them what they want me to do, to be, that I'll do and be anything they say. Then we have a big scene in which these two little stinkers, twelve and ten, tell me the kind of man they want me to be. Some of their remarks are childish and silly, but others are wonderfully wise. From there we go to the finish.

What a good, decent, highly educated but unworldly man learns from two children and one woman was the point of the play. It should be good if written with insight and feeling.

So I spent two months on that play, calling it *The Family Circle.* It collapsed because I couldn't make the issue between the father and children big enough without making him a fellow I wouldn't care to write about in this kind of play. The whole thing went quaint on me, and I dropped it with distaste.

In the meantime, I had been brooding darkly over two cruel words Brooks Atkinson, the drama critic on the *New York Times,* had used about *Skylark.* He said, in a Sunday article, that it was "badly written." If he had said it was a bad play, I could have taken it. Anybody might write a bad play. . . The success of *Skylark* at the box office was no balm on my wounds. I invited Mr. Atkinson to lunch to fight it out, and we spent two hours at the Harvard Club (his club and his check) which left the definition

of bad writing as far up in the air as it had been before, and left me brooding even more darkly on critics. Suddenly—why not make my hero a critic, I said.

So I began again. I opened with a scene in which a playwright was calling on the critic because the playwright was writing a play about a critic. I wrote a scene between the two men, in which their awkwardnesses in each other's presence, their sudden little telltale revelations, their genuine but shy curiosity about each other's deepest motives, really came into play. This scene fooled me; it made me think I had a three-act drama. But before I got through writing it, I wobbled all over the place. I jumped my hero's age to fifty, made the kids twenty-two and twenty, the wife forty-five. In order to get into them, I did it as a two-hundred-page fiction sketch first. It didn't read badly. I showed the fiction sketch, which I politely called a novel, to a publisher. He said he thought it would make a good serial for the *Saturday Evening Post,* but he didn't think it was quite right as a book. I showed it to the *Saturday Evening Post,* and they said it would make an excellent book, but it was no serial.

So I dropped the whole thing.

Then I said to myself, after a week of not writing: the trouble with you is you're a writer of comedy, and you're trying to be Ibsen. You've written so much about this critic now that your resentment of Atkinson has faded; the critic has become human and likable; what about a fast-moving, funny little play? Why should you shake the world to its foundations? Why not an honest, spicy, bantering, distinguished, not unmomentous little farce?

I came up with a number called *In My Opinion.* In Act One a young critic—about thirty—is married to a beautiful girl of twenty-five, who gave up her budding career on the stage because he wanted to have nothing to do with actors, on account of he had integrity. So after a year of marriage, a playwright sees her dining at Twenty-One, says you're just the type for my play, and she falls. On her opening night her husband sees the show. It's a Saturday night opening, and he doesn't have to write his review until Sunday. They come together after the performance with the understanding that the critic isn't to say a word. However, she seduces him into telling her what he thinks of the show and her performance, promising that it will not affect their relations. He tells her he thought the show was lousy and so was she. She accepts this with beautiful

calm, but five minutes later she gets into a terrific row with him over whether the window in the room should be open or not.

Second Act. She stayed at a hotel that night. It's now Sunday morning, and the critic, who is madly in love with her, is going crazy. She comes home to get her clothes—she's going to leave him. By this time the critic honestly has convinced himself that he likes the play, that he was prejudiced last night because she was in it. He tells her so. They are very happy. He starts writing his review, and she starts helping him. A group of her actor friends swarm in. She invites them to start helping her to help him, too. He suddenly realizes what has happened to himself, and he turns on them all. Now she leaves him for fair.

In the third act it all comes out all right. I honestly can't remember how— although I wrote the play and we tried it out in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. It couldn't have been very bad, because Theresa Helburn of the Theatre Guild saw it and said if you polish it a little, we'll produce it. I figured that there was about two weeks' work in the re-write, and I went to it. But the more I dug into the play, the worse it looked, and I finally bowed out on Miss Helburn. The hell with it, I said: I'll never write about writers or the theatre again.

I went to Hollywood and wrote the screen play of *Suspicion,* and when I finished that, I was all ready for a new attack on this critic. I saw him at last in his full dimensions. He was "Everyman" in the sense that this is a world of men in offices, that all these men must feel sometimes that somehow life is passing them by and that they have lost contact with "the people." The critic was a very good symbol, I felt—and I still feel.

I called this new play *Everybody Is Wonderful.* Its first act was substantially the first act of *Jason* as it stands today. Its second act I laid in a park. The playwright, a colorful, uninhibited fellow, was giving a picnic party in Central Park to our hero and two other critics. I was going to bring Jason in contact with "the people" in a park. I got the people in—a gum-chewing cash girl, a newsboy, an old man, a little Salvation Army group, a steam fitter, his wife, his daughter and her boy friend. By the time I reached page 35, the act had gone to pieces. There were too many other people in it. I had lost Jason and his wife in the shuffle.

I fooled with that act for about two months and got nowhere. But I couldn't abandon that wonderful little Salvation Army group and that enchanting cash girl. By now I had spent, counting six

months out for *Suspicion* and one other movie, almost two years on the play, and enough was enough. I quit.

A week later I changed the scene to the little backyard of Jason's house. I needed grass for the spot where the heroine put her bare feet on the grass. It didn't occur to me that this might be conveyed with words. I fooled with that backyard another month. Then I found a way of putting the whole thing indoors, and the act suddenly came to life, being precisely the second act as it is now in the published edition of *Jason.*

By that time I had long passed the point of worrying about a third act. I had left that to the gods. Now the gods passed the buck back to me. I got the first half of it pretty well, but I got wholly lost in the last half, writing as many as four different last halves. By this time I was not only through with the play, but I had decided to abandon playwriting as a career. It shouldn't be so *hard,* I said. Look at Shakespeare—playwriting came easily to him. Look at me when I wrote *Accent on Youth* and *Skylark*—I didn't have to press in those days. My time is over, and I might as well face it. I'll get a job as a feature writer somewhere—when you write features, the material is there; all you have to do is put it down. Why kill yourself, and then, ten to one, they'll say, if the play's a success, go and see it if you want to see what a brilliant actor can do with lousy material.

Then the inevitable and right ending came—the whole play had been moving toward it like an arrow—and I wondered why I hadn't seen it from the start. Dramatize the dictation of a review —the agonies a man can go through before he formulates that vital thing, an opinion. I wrote it the way it is now.

I don't think I changed more than five lines in rehearsal. The entrances and exits worked, and the long speeches held. I added the opening twenty speeches of the second act when I found the mood was not quite clear to the actor who played Jason. In explaining to him Jason's "key," I found myself saying things that were not in the play, so I put them down in dialogue where he would have to say them himself and live up to them for the rest of the play.

HOW THE THEATRE IS REPRESENTED IN THE NEGRO COLLECTION AT YALE

by

CARL VAN VECHTEN

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters, which, through the invitation of the Librarian, Bernard Knollesberg, I founded at Yale University in 1941, is certainly only incidentally devoted to theatrical materials, but just as certainly, we are passionately interested in every scrap of matter which concerns the Negro in the theatre. I dare say that many persons, when the Negro Theatre is mentioned, think of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or at best, *Porgy* or *The Emperor Jones,* forgetting that three of the most famous playwrights of the modern stage had Negro forebears. Actually, the Negro Theatre might boast as many ancient traditions as the theatre of other races, for assuredly it was born in the dance dramas of pre-historic Africa. The Negro was the inspiration for the American Minstrel Show and many of the best minstrel performers (James C. Bland, the composer of *Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny,* for example) were colored men. For what we once called Ragtime, which has been developed into what we call Jazz and Swing and Hot Music, we are also indebted to the Negro, as these sounds were first blown into the world by black lips in the basements of Memphis and New Orleans. The Negro Theatre has its classical traditions too: the Negro tragedian, Ira Aldridge, toured Europe in *Othello* and other classical plays in the middle of the Nineteenth Century; Sissieretta Jones ("the Black Patti") rivalled Sofia Scalchi as a concert singer in the Nineties; and the playwrights referred to above, Alexandre Dumas, father and son, and Alexander Pushkin, in their respective periods, dominated the stages of Europe and, in the case of *La Dame aux Camélias,* of the entire Western World.

It is not generally known, perhaps, that another playwright with Negro blood, Victor Séjour, born in New Orleans, was a successful writer of melodrama in Paris from 1841 to 1861, contemporary with the younger Dumas, and is buried in the famous Paris cemetery of Père Lachaise. There are about seventeen of his very bad plays in the Yale Library and I have taken the trouble to read one or two. Completely divorced from reality (or even poetry or fantasy) the plays possessed the glamour of the spectacular and the speeches in them were endowed with the ephemeral charm of flamboyant rhetoric. The fact to be noted is that a Negro from New Orleans

made such a profound impression on the theatre world of Paris that he had twenty-one of his plays successfully produced there in the principal theatres at a time when notable French playwrights were almost as common as blueberries in Maine during the month of August.

The James Weldon Johnson Collection is not lacking in reminders of the two Dumas (it even contains autographed letters of the elder Dumas) or of Pushkin or of Séjour. The plays of these men may be studied here, but up to this time the Collection has been more concerned with the writers of the present century. It is already possible for a student to examine in the Yale Library, either in book form or in manuscript, almost any play by or about Negroes produced since 1900. For instance, all of Langston Hughes's plays exist in the Collection in manuscript (usually in several drafts) and they comprise a much more extensive list than playgoers in general are aware of, because, while the public has seen *Mulatto* and *Don't You Want to Be Free?*, the latter script is almost unique among this author's plays in achieving publication, while *When the Jack Hollers, Little Ham, Joy to My Soul,* and *Outshines the Sun,* have been performed by the Gilpin Players at the Karamu Theatre in Cleveland, and *The Sun Do Move* has been produced only in Chicago. A future investigator will discover that he may examine at New Haven not only the various scripts of Hughes's pageant, *For This We Fight,* recently enacted at Madison Square Garden, but also programs, dodgers, posters, and even tickets for this event.

Owen Dodson is another Negro playwright abundantly represented here by his manuscripts. Mr. Dodson was formerly an undergraduate at Yale where, in succeeding years, two of his plays were presented by the white students: *Divine Comedy*[1] (built around the career of Father Divine) and *Garden of Time*[1], an arrangement of the Medea legend. Mr. Dodson subsequently became the head of the Drama Department in Atlanta University, where he produced *The Cherry Orchard,* and still later he headed the Drama Department at Hampton Institute, where he produced *Hedda Gabler.* Until recently he has been a sailor in the American Navy, stationed at the Great Lakes Station in Illinois where his superior officers availed themselves of his experience and talent by putting him in charge of the "Happy Hours" program at Camp Robert Smalls, a program designed to entertain the drafted and enlisted sailors at this spot. Seaman Dodson took full advantage of his opportunity to do a great

[1] Manuscript in the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale.

deal more than entertain the boys. He wrote and produced a series of "Pageants of Freedom," one devoted to the story of Dorie Miller, Negro hero of Pearl Harbor, another devoted to the wonder of George Washington Carver (*Climbing to the Soil*). *Everybody Join Hands*[1] publishes the passionate faith of the Chinese folk, while *Freedom the Banner* is an attempt to express the contemporary feeling of the Russians. While he was stationed there, new dramas were offered to the sailors in this Camp nearly every month, while the more popular older pieces were repeated. The manuscripts of these miniature dramas, intended for the consumption of sailors often hitherto unfamiliar with the theatre and thereby tempting the author to employ experimental forms, have been presented to the Collection in their several drafts, together with invitations, programs and posters, frequently designed by the Negro painter, Charles Sebree. One of the most interesting of Mr. Dodson's manuscripts is that of his play *Amistad,* written for and produced at Talladega College in Alabama in 1939. The title is taken from the name of a slave ship with a curious history of which the dénouement, the trial of the escaped slaves, fortuitously occurred in the courts of New Haven. Preserved in the Library at Yale, further, is a series of portraits of these slaves.

The manuscript of Countee Cullen's play, *One Way to Heaven,* derived from his novel of the same name, is in the Collection. So is the manuscript of the play he wrote with Arna Bontemps, *God Sends Sunday.* So is the manuscript of the Prologue and Epilogue to Mr. Cullen's version of the Medea, which were not yet written when the play was published.

An inscribed copy of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and copies of such other of this author's plays as deal with Negroes are in the Collection in first editions. So are such other celebrated plays as *The Green Pastures, Goat Alley,* the plays of Ridgely Torrence, *In Abraham's Bosom* and other plays by Paul Green, William Dubois's *Haiti,* Richard Wright's *Native Son, Mamba's Daughters,* Edward Sheldon's *The Nigger,* and *Stevedore.* Pamphlets, manuscripts, books relating to the Negro in the Theatre abound in the Collection.

The Collection is rich in photographs. My own collection of photographs of Negro celebrities was extensive before I dreamed of giving it to Yale, although it consisted largely of portraits of contemporaries or those more recently dead. When Mrs. Isaacs invited

[1] Published in *Theatre Arts* in September, 1943.

me to become a member of the committee which planned the Negro number of *Theatre Arts,* published in August 1942, I discovered, along with the other members of the committee and the editors of the magazine, that photographs of Negroes so recently deceased as Florence Mills and Bert Williams did not exist in any considerable quantity, while photographs of stage celebrities as well known as George Walker, Aida Overton Walker, and Ernest Hogan, almost might be said not to exist at all. It isn't that these dancers and actors and singers were not frequently photographed in their day. It is that, generally speaking, few persons had taken the trouble to collect and to preserve their photographs. I have since made a determined effort to dislodge from their hiding places as many photographs, lithographs, or pictures in any reproduced form, of as many Negro stage celebrities as can be found.

For some time, too, I have been making my own photographs of Negroes and in the field of the theatre these have become an impressive group, including not only James Weldon Johnson and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson (who wrote words and music for Klaw and Erlanger extravaganzas at the turn of the century, long before they became famous in other fields), but also Langston Hughes (whose *Mulatto* may have received more performances than any other play by a dramatist with Negro blood save the dramas of the two Dumas!). There are also photographs of Rose McClendon, the fine actress, and Ruby Elzy, the touching singer of the role of Serena in *Porgy,* both, alas, dead; of *Maxine Sullivan* who probably can swing *Loch Lomond* in her sleep; of Joe Louis whose legitimate position in a theatre collection derives from the fact that he appears in the motion picture version of *This is the Army* and in another cinema or two; of Elisabeth Welch, better known in London and Paris than in New York, where she originally sang Cole Porter's *Love for Sale;* of the principal singers of Virgil Thomson's setting of Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts;* of Oscar Polk, Marian Anderson, Canada Lee, Georgette Harvey, Lena Horne, Katherine Dunham, Bill Robinson, Ethel Waters, W. C. Handy, Cab Calloway, Jimmie Daniels, Fredi Washington, Dorothy Maynor, Paul Robeson, and many others. I am still taking photographs of Negro celebrities, so this branch of the Collection will continue to grow automatically.

In the matter of letters the Collection has also been fortunate. I am a prolific letter writer myself and frequently my letters are answered. My Negro correspondence has all been presented to the Collection. Letters have also poured into the New Haven Library

from other sources so that now the Collection contains hundreds of autographed letters from (and to) James Weldon Johnson, Ethel Waters, Langston Hughes, Richard B. Harrison ("de Lawd" of *The Green Pastures*) Roland Hayes, Paul and Essie Robeson, Rose McClendon, Florence Mills, and others.

In the matter of phonograph records the Collection finds itself in the propitious position of possessing almost complete sets of the records of the "Empress of the Blues," Bessie Smith, (of whom Hugues Panassié has written in *Hot Jazz,* "She is so perfect she defies all description and all praise.") and of the superb Ethel Waters, including not only her suave deliveries of the melodies she has made famous (*Dinah, Am I Blue?, Stormy Weather,* etc.) but also her early raucous and obscene plaints (*Maybe Not at All, Shake that Thing, Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night,* and the like). Paul Robeson, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Cab Calloway are also well represented, while the voices of other well-known Negro singers, Clara, Mamie, and Trixie Smith, "Ma" Rainey, Sloppy Henry, Lena Wilson, Gertrude Saunders, Victoria Spivey, Joshua White, Billie Holliday, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and many more are preserved on discs in the Collection.

J. Rosamond Johnson, W. C. Handy, and Henry Thacker Burleigh have given the Collection manuscripts of their songs and many first editions of these songs, inscribed, may be examined in the Yale Library. From William Grant Still we have received the manuscript of his ballet, *Sahdji.* From Hall Johnson has come the manuscript of the original songs in *Run, Little Chillun,* and William Dawson and Clarence Cameron White have been generous with their musical manuscripts.

The modern theatre has many branches and in every one of these the Negro occupies an important niche. In moving pictures, not only is he an important member of the cast in many big productions (*Gone with the Wind, Imitation of Life, In This Our Life,* and many another film) but also a few pictures, such as the early *Hallelujah* and the later *Cabin in the Sky,* have been devoted entirely to the Negro. He is often a feature of radio entertainment. He sings in opera. Many operas, such as *L'Africaine, Aida,* and *Jonny Spielt Auf* have Negro protagonists; still others, such as *Lakmé, Salome, Samson et Dalila,* and even *Carmen* and *Cavalleria Rusticana,* may be performed appropriately by dark-skinned singers. Dean Dixon has made a name for himself as a conductor of symphonic works. The Negro is a figure in ballet, notably in *Petrouschka* and *Sche-*

herazade. Agnes de Mille composed and produced, for the Ballet Theatre, an entire ballet, *Dark Ritual*, danced by Negroes. Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus, Belle Rosette, Feral Benga, are all Negro dancers who have won applause on the boards. In the legitimate theatre it is the rule rather than the exception to discover Negroes in the cast; the concert stage is studded with Negro stars and Marian Anderson shines brighter than any white star in this particular firmament.

One of the more interesting features of the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale is the series of boxes, indexed and catalogued, devoted to the Negro in the Theatre, Ballet, Opera, Concert, and the Motion Pictures. These boxes contain programs, clippings of reviews and interviews, photographs, even personal notes and letters. This miscellany is fluid of course, and is constantly growing both into the past and during the present. As often as sufficient material accumulates further boxes are added. A specimen box is devoted to Paul Robeson material. It contains over seventy-five photographs and over thirty programs of plays and concerts signed by Mr. Robeson, occasionally with explanatory notes; pamphlets and leaflets, over forty leaves of clippings, articles about Mr. Robeson, and other items. Another box contains twenty-two Marian Anderson programs together with twenty-four pages of mounted clippings concerning the contralto; Taylor Gordon and J. Rosamond Johnson materials; Dorothy Maynor programs; items dealing with *Four Saints in Three Acts;* Clarence Cameron White's Negro opera, *Ouanga; La Belle Hélène* as given by Negroes at Westport; *Porgy and Bess;* and the concert and opera appearances of Caterina Jarboro who has sung *Aida* in New York.

There is nothing then pertaining to the Negro too important or too unimportant to fit into this Collection. Certainly welcome, as they come in, are Pushkin and Dumas letters, manuscripts, and first editions, Ira Aldridge programs, photographs, prose descriptions of African tribal dances and phonograph records of the music which accompanies them; welcome also are Bob Cole's laundry bills, posters of nineteenth-century Minstrel shows, stills of Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel, Clarence Muse, Butterfly McQueen, or other prominent Negro picture actors, dodgers advertising Sissieretta Jones, or songs written by Will Marion Cook to be sung by Abbie Mitchell, or pamphlets or books in any form relating to the Negro. Their arrival is always the cause of great interest for they add to this Collection of Negro material that is meant to be as useful to

future students as enthusiastic accumulation, careful explanation, and arrangement can make it.

ADOLPHE APPIA'S "LIVING ART OR STILL LIFE?"

Translated by S. A. RHODES

Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) is an historical character in the theatre and his fame, as an innovator, is legendary. Yet, so little of his actual work is known in graphic form or in translation here in the United States, that we began a search for a piece of his writing, short enough for quick reading, which would embody a statement of his basic theory of dramatic projection. *Living Art or Still Life?* seemed to come closest to what we were looking for. This essay was written in conjunction with an exhibition of theatrical scene designs in Milan in 1923. In the text of the essay are references to this exhibition interwoven with Appia's statement of theory. At first we thought to present only the theory but as the exhibition is the object by which Appia demonstrates the points of his exposition, we decided to let the whole essay stand. Thus, *Living Art or Still Life?* is presented in full for your consideration except for the translator's omission of these ten words: ". . . which is to be found here in the reading room." EDITOR'S NOTE.

Dramatic art is in full process of development and this phenomenon resembles very closely a state of anarchy. More than ever we feel the need of understanding the subject of the theatre, and of seeking together the principle which will lead us from disorder and incoherence and guide us toward a desired, but not easily formulated, style. Thus, a theatrical exhibition answers a justifiable desire, and we must gratefully applaud the efforts made in this direction by its organizers.

However, a question arises immediately: can the theatre be exhibited and, if so, what elements does it offer for a thorough demonstration? The answer to this is just what we are seeking.

To begin with, the art of the drama must have a building set aside for its own use. Unfortunately, architecture cannot be exhibited. The art of mass and weight cannot be expressed by means of a model or a drawing; these are intended to have meaning for professionals alone. Everyone upon leaving a picture gallery, for instance, and entering into an architectural exhibit, must have found that although painting had been well exhibited in the one, architecture could not be so well exhibited in the other; and that consequently, one had passed from a tangible and perfect reality (painting) to a conventional, linear and expressionless abstraction. Moreover, as architecture has no significance except when it is put in the service of man, its proper place does not seem to be in an exhibition

where it can be shown only on a reduced scale. The galleries reserved to architecture in our exposition can have but a narrow, practical aim then, and cannot appeal to the layman. The variety of playhouse and stage arrangements, the technical combinations and installations of the electrician and stage carpenter, are shown likewise in abstract reductions, and not comprehended by three-fourths of the visitors. If we turn now to the galleries set aside for scenery, limited space will confine us again to reduced scales, to more or less colored models and drawings. Add to these costume designs where the quality of materials and the effects they produce during the movements of actors are not expressed in the immobility of a drawing, and we shall perceive the limitations to what the theatre can contribute to a mere exhibition in a gallery. The only other things of documentary interest missing are the books and scores, photographs or portraits, and, to leave nothing out, the musical instruments whose *ensemble* constitutes the modern orchestra.

Does that really represent what we go to the theatre for and what we ask of it? Is dramatic art no more than the juxtaposition of these inanimate paraphernalia? Let us imagine real stage settings, under the most favorable conditions, with characters surrounded by scenery which is adjusted to their size—would that be drama? What gives the impetus (that is the exact word!) to dramatic art is movement, precisely as it is the first beat from the conductor's baton that starts off the whole symphony, not inherent in the orchestra itself, even in embryo. So far as the eye of the spectator is concerned, the essence of drama is movement. However, can this be exhibited? Certainly! But for an exhibition one must have a great deal of time available, a great deal. . .

Dramatic art—the theatre which we wish to exhibit—begins with movement; whatever precedes it is, doubtless, useful and very interesting material but not indispensable, and therefore cannot represent the theatre.

We have then, on the one hand, the building, the stage, the scenery, the costumes; and on the other, living and moving creatures —the actors, whose presence is the *sine qua non* of the theatre's very existence. Dramatic art is first of all the art of life and, if need be, life can be expressed without a building or scenery because indefinite time and space are sufficient for its expression.

What impels us then over and again to explain our investigations in such an apparently arbitrary domain as scenic design?

In former days staging was confined to the painting of scenery

upon vertical canvases cut up and placed in perspective, one beside the other. The stage director's task was reduced to determining the grouping and movement of the performers in the midst of all that vertical painting, while bearing in mind the incompatibility that exists between two-dimensional canvases and three-dimensional actors. The prodigious development of scene painting must be attributed to the growing luxury introduced into opera and ballet; it harmonized well enough with the stereotyped and formularized song and dance conventions for the spectator to be innocently taken in by the technical absurdity he was thus being subjected to. But concern for verisimilitude and realism in the theatre came to upset our habits. First of all we have imposed upon painting the historical, geographical and social demands of a text which hugged reality closer than in former days. Soon, however, action itself turned realistic, and as painting could not be harmonized with the playing of the actors, the issue of the two and three dimensions became increasingly imperious; on the one hand, the producer still clung to painting from long habit; but, on the other, he prayed for the plasticity (practicability) that painting denied him. The result was that the authors largely confined their plots to locales whose outlines were easy to represent. That was the situation when, doubtless under the powerful impulse of sports, the dance gradually emancipated itself. The living and mobile body asserted itself—and, this is of primary importance—asserted itself outside the psychological probabilities of a fixed dramatic action. Dancing rose to the rank of a self-expressive art! From that day forward, the painting of scenery was doomed. Its death is, unfortunately for us at least, a slow one but it is absolute; and the esthetic truth represented by the living body has definitely triumphed. At the present moment, and for all those who are seriously interested in the theatre, it is the actor and his playing, the dancer and his rhythmic and mobile plasticity, who dictate scenic designing, and even the interior arrangement and the exterior of the theatre building. We are free at last! Now it is up to us to show our liberation by deeds; that is why we hold theatrical exhibitions. Through these exhibitions we expect to prove the supremacy of the living body of the actor over the inanimate stage setting—of living art over still life. It remains to be seen whether we are resorting to sufficiently definite means. First of all, let us think of the visitors for, in this instance as in others, laymen and professionals are mingled together and our demonstration must be thorough enough to interest the

craftsman, and brilliant enough to carry conviction with the laymen. Can the two things be reconciled?

Although movement itself is independent of environment, it is desirable, nevertheless, to give it a broken space which will set off its episodes and subtle variations, that is to say, to place obstacles in opposition to it. To this end the author, and through him the actor, must be able to rely upon the absolute adaptability of the inanimate materials. We find ourselves then facing obligations which are quite unlike those which painting wrongly imposed upon us. For motion proceeds from a three-dimensional body, and it is apparent that if we wish to serve it, a definitive rejection of painting on vertical planes is implied or, at least, there is the implication of its reduction to a minimum. Since space so conceived is dependent exclusively upon the movements of the actor, all our plans must be intended for him alone. The actor, however, cannot state anything precisely without the playwright. The normal hierarchy will then be—author, actor, space. However, let us beware, for this is an organic hierarchy: the author cannot deal with space except through the actor! It is because this fundamental, technical truth has been neglected that staging has fallen into a state of utter confusion. We touch the crux of the matter then at this point.

Most stage settings and models shown in this exhibition are of plays already known and seek to realize a scene sprung directly from the imagination of the author or of the scene painter, without relating it hierarchically to the actor. Of course, the actor is given sympathetic consideration; one setting grants him a small place; another almost allows for his presumed acting, and still another even goes so far as to mold and render practicable the places which are to come in actual contact with his three living dimensions. Then, one setting tries, by means of childish methods, to link, after a fashion, this accidental reality with the fine vertically sectioned painting. However, the general effect of the scene is always considered sufficient in itself; the actor is placed in it out of gracious condescension, for he is an undeniable kill-joy in it. One setting even goes to the extent of representing the scenery in the exhibited drawings not as it is in reality, that is to say, with the halting concurrence of the two and three dimensions, but as it would be without that painful necessity! The drawing of a setting ought always to convey to the visitor the exact impression it will give him when it is constructed in reality on the stage, without hypocritical reductions (particularly in regard to the floor and to the base of the canvases);

otherwise it is a deception and it contributes considerably to confuse his judgment. Out of our normal hierarchy it follows that an exhibition of scenery will no longer consist of drawings and models which display painting, but will be purely a space project conditioned by the actor's living and moving presence, which is itself put at the disposal of the playwright; and this hierarchic principle must be confirmed by the composition and integrity of the drawing. Now, as these spaces can have meaning—and hence expression—only through the presence of the actor moving about in them, these mere space drawings or models will give a strong impression of incompleteness and will cause the visitor to wish for the presence of the living body which alone inspired them. Thus, if we so limit the elements of a theatrical exhibit, it will not prove conclusive for the general public, and will fail its objectives; for it will appeal only to craftsmen capable of animating these deserted and lifeless settings in their imaginations. Hence, it is necessary to add to them their natural complement, and this complement is movement!

The conclusion to be drawn is that, in order to be complete, a theatrical exhibition must show, on the one hand, the spaces destined for movement; on the other, the movement which has inspired and conditioned these spaces; the one thing without the other would remain fragmentary. Now, movement on one hand and space on the other does not constitute theatre. It is from their meeting and fusion that the spark flies which lights up life on the stage and spreads its flame. This alone can bring conviction to all. Moreover, one cannot conceive motion without space, thus we should have two simultaneous exhibitions; on the one hand, the galleries reserved for architecture, for technical installations, for stage sets, models and costumes; on the other hand, the large halls designed for the changing composition of space to three dimensions and to the scale of the human body. The first galleries would be permanent; the others, accessible during the hours of live demonstrations and performances, animated by actors, singers and dancers.

Let us stop one moment in these last rooms. They will justify and explain the very considerable sacrifices demanded and necessarily consented to in the drawing and model galleries. The visitor will have been surprised in the presence of the exhibit of inanimate spaces, he will have experienced the salutary need of a complement, and this feeling of emptiness will be the beginning of his wisdom! He must be made to feel this lack. Then, the throwing open of the rooms—where the animation of still space and the fusion of the

two elements into a living synthesis will be consummated under his very eyes—will rid him of doubt and free him from a long standing prejudice. In his own mind he might not have believed this union possible; he had to see it to believe it. We professionals are in duty bound to provide him with the means for this.

In my book *L'oeuvre d'art vivant* (The Living Work of Art), I have studied the shape which space must have to combine with the forms and movements of the living being; and I came to the conclusion that space does not share in the life of a body by assuming its forms, but, on the contrary, by offering resistance to it. For this effect, the composition of space will be laid out by means of a small number of lines only. These will be: the horizontal, the vertical, the oblique (inclined plane) and their combinations, such, for example, as the stairway which enters into a sort of complicity with the body that no other combination can pretend to. This simplicity of composition permits the use of material which is easy to handle. It will consist of studs of varied dimensions, carefully measured, for the purpose of combining and fitting them together, thus building stairways, terraces, inclined planes supported, if need be, by pillars uniformly set at right angles, perpendicular hangings, screens, etc: a complete play of studs, based upon rectilinear forms in opposition to the round contours of the body, and to the trajectory curves of bodily movements. These constructions may be changed with no other apparatus but what an intelligent and capable workman can supply. Let us add that the demonstration will be all the more convincing if the color and costume are uniform, placing space and movement in the spotlight, and not distracting the eyes with elements which are, after all, secondary. The studs will be covered with canvas cloth; the costumes will be simple, either black tights over the naked body but which leave the neck, arms, legs and feet bare and unadorned (this is the study uniform for the Dalcroze rhythmics); or else, with the same idea in mind, a short tunic. For these demonstrations, the lighting will fall exclusively from above in order to set off clearly the forms of the bodies in motion and the plastic design of the setting. Never shall there be footlights! Experience has shown that it is advisable to soften and diffuse the light evenly by means of a muslin, tinged yellow-gold. The shifting of these practicable settings will take place in sight of the spectator; for here the curtain has no function, since we wish to demonstrate, not to conceal. The whole arrangement is the same as that of the Jacques Dalcroze Institute. During the last days of the exhibition

real performances may be attempted, but care will be taken to observe the obligatory simplicity. One might even venture the performance of plays of a nature not too obviously in contradiction with the adopted principle.

Such rooms will become a field for experimentation because the art of staging will always remain empirical; they will also become a touchstone for dramatic art for, in them, authors will find invaluable information. This will certainly induce them to participate in it and from that point on, to a fruitful understanding with the spectator, is but a step. The exhibition of the theatre will have become a living thing! Space is lacking here to develop such a subject but before I close, I should like to mention certain fundamental ideas which are indispensable to the reformation of dramatic art and which I have already mentioned in *L'oeuvre d'art vivant.*

In order to enter into the realm of art, movement must change its measure and rhythm; this must not be an arbitrary process; hence it must emanate from a principle that we can accept. At the present time, we have only music for this purpose; it is the indubitable expression of our soul, and, consequently, it springs from our innermost will. It is therefore indispensable that we transfuse our being with its elements through rhythm. Everybody knows that Jacques Dalcroze has discovered the way to do this. His body rhythm proceeds from within to without, not seeking its inspiration outside itself. The beauty of his exercises is nothing but the natural result and thus, body rhythm is the only thing that can establish the esthetic equilibrium of our whole being. Under its discipline our body becomes a marvelous instrument of infinite resources. In contact with it, space comes to life and participates in the living proportions of movement; the representative blending is thus achieved. The question that will be asked is—what relation could exist between this phenomenon and our modern theatre? The answer is that it is precisely in seeking to reform staging that the whole problem of dramatic art arises for reconsideration; for it is evident that the two are closely interdependent. One of the present-day errors is the desire to reform the one without in any way changing the other, and even to apply the new principles to plays which do not call for them at all. Moreover, how many of our theatre directors are staging plays which they would never have considered were it not for this pretext alone! The emancipation of the body has liberated us in a representative way but it has not yet done so in regard to dramatic art itself. We waver, crushed under the impedi-

ments of the past, not yet daring to shake them off completely, and disturbed by the new possibilities which have outstripped the art of dramatic composition and theatrical representation. Recently, even a Roman orgy was staged entirely on a staircase—a poorly chosen spot for a voluptuous scene! This is a period of transition and in order to master it, one must be clearly conscious of it. We now know that movements, forms, lines, light, and colors are at our disposal; the dogmas of the staging of the past are overthrown; but we have not as yet realized how much they had weighed upon our very conception of dramatic production and have always suggested or imposed upon it the same forms.

The fatidic framework of our scenery always seeks to dominate our imaginations and this reaches a point where a spectacle without spectators appears to us devoid of significance; as if the artistic life of the body must necessarily be exhibited. The very arbitrary conventions of our theatres and stages, which are designed in relation to each other, always are imposed upon us. Upon reflection, however, we must note that everything in the development of modern life tends toward a change in the theatre—even our very idea of it—and that, at least, the moving pictures exert a salutary influence upon it. Thus we are wrong to assign the same structures both to the current repertory and to the experimental novelties; their rigid framework, through suggestion, operates to retard considerably our efforts toward liberation. Let us abandon then these theatres to their dying past, and let us erect simple buildings destined merely to cover the space where we shall work.

No stage, no amphitheatre; only a bare and empty room at our disposal. . . clear spaces everywhere to store the practicable properties and complete lighting equipment. That will comprise the inanimate aspect. On the other side; actors, singers, dancers, rhythmists, authors, musicians and artists, all men of good will, offering their talents to the new task and free of professional prejudice, uniting to further the cause, to direct, suggest or to work, each one according to his abilities. When we shall have become strong enough for a convincing demonstration, it will be easy to install temporary tiers for a knowledge-seeking public and this public will be naturally inclined to co-operate through its reaction and advice. Little by little, we shall be able to plan—with the public's assistance, doubtless—new spectacles, linked to each other, and to branch out from one means of expression to another; this experimental field will become a sort of nursery of dramatic art in which the only ones

to remain inactive or silent will be those held to their spectator seats by age or infirmity. Then we shall have a living art!

This is the sort of art all our exhibitions must prepare; all our efforts must tend toward it, whatever be the field in which they are exercised. Then we shall learn that art in its noblest form is an act of reciprocal subordination greatly surpassing our narrow personal aspirations. The influence of such an institution cannot be estimated; it will embrace our entire culture, governing and quickening it. The painter, the sculptor and the poet will not seek to express in their works what living art alone can realize; the authors and artists, busy in our exhibition room, will be careful not to borrow from the fine arts and literature motifs which movement will contradict. The public taste will be refined. This will guide its judgment and render it capable of co-operating still further and more effectually in the great work. This is a dream of the future! However, nothing will prevent its realization some day, if we begin to prepare for its advent forthwith. Theatrical exhibitions are assuming an advance-guard character and, rather than the stage managers, it is the authors who still bear the burden of dead traditions and of a deeply rooted habit. Indeed, as we have said, the conception of the theatre must be freed; our dramatists do not yet realize their freedom and continue to regard the theatre with suspicion, or to submit to it passively. How can we be annoyed with them? The task of convincing them devolves upon us, the stage designers, and all our designs ought to give evidence of a happy emancipation!

THE SCHOOL THEATRE OF THE JESUITS

by

HENRY SCHNITZLER

Not long after the Order of the Jesuits had been established in 1540, its purpose was expressed in the following words of its Constitution: "The object of this Society is to labor not only for the salvation and perfection of our own souls, by the help of God's Grace, but also, by the same help devote ourselves zealously to the salvation and perfection of our neighbors."[1] Thus the missionary character of the Order was proclaimed at once. The Jesuit Fathers were to be fighters for the Roman Catholic Church and

[1] The *Primum ac generale examen* of the Constitutions; of H. Dwight-Sedgwick, *Ignatius Loyola* (New York 1923), p. 216.

against the growing danger of the new faith which had conquered vast portions of the European continent. In its capacity as one of the strongest instruments of the Counter Reformation, the "Societas Jesu" strove to regain lost territory and to re-establish the Catholic faith in as many countries as possible, by bringing home with a firm hand or even by force the souls which had gone astray.

Since education presented itself as one of the most effective means to achieve these ends, the Order immediately started a huge educational program throughout the southern and western parts of Europe wherever it was able to gain a foothold. The success of this program was so great that Jesuit teaching penetrated even into Protestant countries. Within a few decades, Jesuit priests became "the schoolmasters of Europe."[1]

Since the Order was based on rigid discipline of an almost military character, its leaders decided to lay down their educational principles in a document which was to be binding on all Jesuit schools. This was the *Ratio Studiorum.* Despite the reformatory character of this educational code, its composition shows that the Jesuits did take over largely the humanistic curriculum.[2] As school dramatics by then had become a matter of course, the regular presentation of plays was adopted as an essential part of Jesuit school activities. However, as in humanistic schools, the initial reason for the cultivation of a dramatic program was not because of any particular interest in the drama, least of all in the theatre, but merely due to the desire to possess an ideal instrument for teaching Latin, as this was the only language spoken in Jesuit schools and use of the vernacular was strictly prohibited. Moreover, the Fathers realized that acting would help the youngsters to gain poise and freedom of expression and movement, qualities regarded as essential for the would-be priests, teachers and statesmen.

Yet the Jesuit teachers immediately recognized that the theatre, aside from its educational value, could be successfully used for still another purpose. Since "Propaganda Fides," the propagation of the faith, was the professed aim of the Order, its leaders strove to employ the stage as a most powerful and effective weapon in the campaign they were about to launch. In fact, the Jesuit school theatre was the first known theatre ever founded as a conscious instrument of propaganda. This attempt was rewarded by a stagger-

[1] *cf.* E. A. Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum* (New York 1933), p. 24.

[2] *cf.* Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.* p. 15.

ing success which completely changed the character of school dramatics. What originally was intended merely to be a part of the curriculum was turned into an instrument of propaganda, political as well as religious. For the Jesuits, in addition to an unswerving glorification of Catholicism, used their plays to eulogize those worldly powers which proved to be the staunchest protectors of the Order, namely, the rulers of Europe's Catholic countries.

Like every other part of Jesuit school life, the theatre was to be strictly regulated. The most important of these regulations reads as follows: "The subject of tragedies and comedies which must not be given except in Latin and on very rare occasions, ought to be sacred and pious, and nothing should be introduced between the acts which is not in Latin and is not becoming; nor is a feminine role nor feminine attire to be introduced."[1] This rule, however, was never followed literally. Soon the number of performances increased; they were not given "on very rare occasions" only; the form of the plays, although invariably emphasizing a religious or moral message, changed in a way which almost did away with their "sacred and pious" quality; interludes were introduced which were not in Latin but in the vernacular and were frequently more entertaining than "becoming" from a strictly religious point of view; eventually also feminine characters and, consequently, feminine attire made their appearance.

The strict discipline which governed the Order brought about the complete uniformity of all its activities. This uniformity necessarily determined the entire character of the Jesuit school theatre which was but slightly colored by nationalist or local influences.

In accordance with the *Ratio Studiorum,* all Jesuit plays were to be performed in Latin. Aside from being the sacred language of the Church, Latin was still the common idiom of science and politics. Yet, unlike the Humanists, whose school performances had been designed for a small audience of learned men and women, the Jesuit priests strove to carry their message to the entire population in which the majority, of course, would not be able to understand a single word spoken on the stage. This apparently contradictory aspect of Jesuit theatre practice might be explained in two ways. First of all, any national color would have interfered with the Order's international character and this danger was averted by the use of a neutral idiom. Secondly, those spectators who did not understand the words, doubtless had the sensation of watching mys-

[1] *Ratio Studiorum; Rules for the Rector,* v. XIII; *cf.* Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.* p. 140.

terious and remote happenings far beyond their intelligence, and such an experience was bound to imbue them with deep respect and infinite reverence. Moreover, the mere sound of Latin certainly created in their minds associations with that other institution where they listened to the same language, the Church. And this was exactly what the Jesuits wanted. In their opinion the effect of a religious play was nowise to be different from that of a religious service. The fact that later on interludes and eventually entire plays in the vernacular were tacitly permitted, marked the beginning of the decline of the Order when its members were compelled to make popular concessions to their dwindling audiences.

The dramatists of this school theatre were without exception Jesuits. It was the duty of the teachers to furnish the plays. The "Ordinarius" of the upper grades, for instance, was under the obligation to write a new play each year. Emphasis must be laid upon the word "new." The Jesuits—with rare exceptions—would not revive plays given previously at their own or at any other school. The necessary result of this practice was an incredible number of plays emerging each year from Jesuit schools all over the world. If one considers that the Order in 1750—to pick one date at random—still counted 22,126 members, 10,594 of whom were priests,[1] one may easily grasp how many plays must have been written that year and also that not all of these plays could possibly have been of high literary value. That they were not is a fact acknowledged even by Jesuit historians.[2] Moreover, the Jesuit playwrights had no literary ambitions. They had so little regard for their own dramatic efforts that they were reluctant to have them published at all. This attitude indicates the main reason why so few Jesuit plays have survived and why still fewer have ever been printed. Although great numbers of Jesuits annually wrote plays, the works of only forty-two of them have been printed. And even these men emphasized that the publication was due only to the urgent wishes of some friends. Besides, they pointed out that in any event the mere text would be a corpse without a soul, since in their opinion all that mattered was the performance.[3]

However, we have one cue as to what the lost plays were like

[1] *cf.* H. Boehmer, *Die Jesuiten* (Leipzig 1904), p. 118.

[2] *cf.* A. Baumgartner, *Geschichte der Weltliteratur*, v. IV. (1900) p. 628; and N. Scheid, "Das lateinische Jesuitendrama" in *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Goerres-Gesellschaft*, v. V. (1930) p. 5.

[3] *cf.* J. Mueller, *Das Jesuitendrama* (Augsburg 1930), v. I. p. 92; add A. von Weilen, "Das Theater 1529-1740" in *Geschichte der Stadt Wien*, ed. by Alterthumsverein of Vienna (1911), v. VI., p. 351.

for the Jesuits distributed among their audiences booklets called *Periochi* or *Synopses*, containing a short narrative—in Latin and in the vernacular—of the plot. These were the only guides on which those unable to understand Latin could rely during the performance. Hundreds of such *Periochi* have been preserved in various countries. They warrant the conclusion that the Jesuits' plays were all cut to the same pattern. Their writing was based on imitation and convention rather than on creativeness and originality. With the exception of a few truly creative spirits, the priests wrote according to the strict formula they were able to find either in the plays of other Jesuits or in books on dramatic theory and technique. This formula suggested the structure of the play and its typical features, of which we shall hear presently. To adorn the speeches of their characters with useful and moral sentences or lovely turns of expression, the teacher-dramatists used collections of quotations, proverbs, and stock phrases, diligently compiled year after year. On the whole, the Jesuit school drama perfectly reflects the Society's uniform and international spirit.

The history of the Jesuit school theatre may be divided into three main periods. The first, lasting from the foundation of the Order until *circa* 1600, was a period of transition, preparation and experimentation. The second, approximately coinciding with the Seventeenth Century, may be called the "Golden Age" of the Jesuit school theatre. The third was the period of the Order's gradual decline, lasting from *circa* 1700 until its eventual suppression in 1773.

During the first period (1540-1600) the Jesuits started by taking over the heritage of their predecessors in the field of school dramatics. They adapted humanistic plays for their own purposes and also performed some comedies by Plautus and Terence. Besides, they followed medieval traditions when they produced spectacular open-air pageants which attracted vast audiences and sometimes lasted several days. The display of skillfully directed mass scenes, combining splendid costumes, exciting action, and lovely music, was intended to stun the crowd. In some of these productions, the participants numbered more than a thousand.[1]

Such mass pageants, however, disappeared almost completely as soon as the Jesuit school theatre entered its second period (1600-1700). From then on, public performances took place in the "Aula,"

[1] *cf.* W. Flemming, "Jesuitentheater" in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, v. II. p. 21*ff*; and F. Schmidt, "Ein Festspiel der Münchener Jesuitenschule im XVI. Jahrhundert" in *Forschungen zur Kultur und Literaturgeschichte Bayerns*, v. III. (1895), p. 12*ff*.

the festival hall. In many schools elaborate theatres were constructed, equipped with all the devices of contemporary stagecraft.[1] The move from the open air into the school building modified the character of the plays. Since the dramatists could no longer rely upon mass effects, they became interested in the individual and in his particular role in the drama. Such tendencies were greatly furthered by the appearance of Jakob Bidermann (1578-1639), the Shakespeare of the Jesuit theatre.[2] *Cenodoxus* (1602), his masterpiece,[3] marked the beginning of the classical age of the Jesuit school drama. Cenodoxus is a brilliant and famous Paris lawyer whom arrogance and depravity lead to eventual doom in the jaws of Hell.[4] In this and in his other plays Bidermann sounded the keynote upon which the Jesuit theatre was to be tuned for decades to come. All favorite motives, all typical features of the Jesuit drama, can be found in his work. To sum up the most important of these might therefore be appropriate at this point.

Basic tendencies of all Jesuit playwrights were: to propagate the faith, to deter the audience from sin, to fire them to conversion, atonement and ultimate recognition of the Catholic dogma. Accordingly they chose subjects which could demonstrate essential points of Jesuit philosophy, such as contempt for the world, the instability of fame and fortune, the constant struggle against the seductions of vice or other diabolical powers, the necessity of Mercy, the value of Redemption, and similar ideas. The tenor of all Jesuit plays was the antithesis, World and God, expressed in the contrast between the heights of worldly fame and the deepest downfall from these heights. The end was either conversion and atonement, or condemnation and destruction of the individual.

Despite the consistency of their *leitmotif*, a survey of the subjects dealt with in Jesuit plays shows an astounding variety. The stories of saints and martyrs were favorite topics, particularly when they were the patrons of the school, city, or country. Episodes from the Bible as well as folk legends were adapted for the stage. Hermit plays were numerous, implying that the flight from this world was a true believer's only desirable goal. Enemies as well as protectors of the Church were presented again and again. It has justly been

[1] The theatre of the Jesuits in Vienna had a seating capacity of 3,000; *cf.* Weilen, *op. cit.* p. 340.

[2] *cf.* J. Mueller, *op. cit.* v. I. p. 43.

[3] *cf.* J. Nadler, *Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Staemme und Landschaften* v. I. (1923) p. 424.

[4] A 17th century German translation (by Joachim Meichel) has been reprinted in W. Flemming, *Das Ordensdrama (Deutsche Literatur, Reihe Barock, Barockdrama* v. II. (1930) .

pointed out that the Jesuits used practically all the great subjects of world drama, many of them for the first time. Thus we find as leading characters of Jesuit plays, Medea, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Brutus, Everyman, Faust, Richard III, Don Carlos, Don Juan, Demetrius, Egmont.

Typical features of Jesuit plays were personifications of abstract ideas, a heritage from the medieval morality plays; dream scenes, employed to reveal the characters' innermost thoughts and desires; apparitions of all kinds, such as ghosts, devils, angels, and spirits of the dead. Miracles and visions were constantly used; Christ and the Virgin appeared on the stage. Sorcerers and magicians conjured up frightful visions of Hell, or influenced the action with black magic. The figure of Death was a familiar sight on the Jesuit school stage and some dramatists even took up the old form of the death dance.[1] The Chorus was frequently used and consisted of allegorical figures who did not take part in the action but pointed out the play's religious meaning. A comedy sub-plot was sometimes skillfully interwoven with the main action, to provide some relief from the strain caused by the tragic and horrifying events. Numerous changes of scenery contributed greatly to the popularity of the Jesuit school theatre.

Interludes were used to serve as a running explanatory comment on the story. What the action showed in terms of human beings, the interludes showed in terms of pure allegory. For earthly events could never be all-important for playwrights who saw in this life nothing but preparation for the next. The plot was significant only in so far as it pointed to some higher meaning; human life being merely a symbol of spiritual ideas. It was therefore vitally important to render these as intelligible as possible for spectators who were unable to follow the Latin dialogue. Consequently the allegorical figures were made to act their own drama. Thus in many Jesuit tragedies the symbolical interludes were logically connected with each other and we have in fact two parallel plays, one explaining the other.

Another device, intended to serve a similar purpose, was the *Scena Muta,* the equivalent of the Dumb-Show.[2] If inserted before an act, the *Scena Muta* predicted ensuing events; if presented after the fall of the curtain, it conveyed a moral message. A musical chorus explained the pantomimic action.

[1] *cf.* A. Duerrwaechter, "Die Darstellung des Todes und Totemtanzes auf den Jesuitenbuehnen" in *Forschungen zur Kultur*—und *Literaturgeschichte Bayerns,* v. V. (1897), p. 89*ff.*

[2] The use of this dramatic device in Jesuit plays seems to be another indication of its Italian origin. *cf.* J. W. Cunliffe, "Italian Prototypes of the Masque and Dumb Show" in *PMLA,* v. XXII. (1907) 140*ff.*

The variety of allegorical figures was astounding. Human emotions and qualities, countries and continents, philosophical and religious ideas appeared as *Dramatis Personae.* A basic tendency of the Baroque Age, the "desire to render perceptible to the senses even the spiritual, the non-sensual and supernatural,"[1] was perfectly expressed in such practices.

The purely theatrical elements in the Jesuit plays were emphasized by another dramatist, Nicola Avancini (1612-1686). He created a new genre of Jesuit drama, the *Ludi Caesarei,* plays in honor of the Emperor. Avancini used historical and heroic topics to demonstrate the inconstancy of worldly values. Yet, his plays invariably ended with the glorification of the Hapsburgs who, being protectors of the Catholic Church, were represented as exemplary rulers and personifications of all conceivable virtues. Avancini was above all a man of the theatre. Using stage effects with the skill of a virtuoso, he vied with the producers of contemporary Italian operas. In fact, his plays are distinguished from the musical drama of the Baroque only by their religious tendency. For Avancini never forgot to remind his audiences that resounding rhetorics, elaborate dance movements, and baffling devices of machinery and lighting, were to serve a spiritual ideal; true to the Jesuit motto which we find at the end of every *Synopsis,* at the bottom of every playbill: "O.A.M.D.G."—"Omnia Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (All To The Greater Glory of God).

In all Jesuit plays comic episodes increased during the latter part of the Seventeenth Century. In striking contrast to the rules of the *Ratio Studiorum,* they were frequently written not in Latin but in the vernacular, thereby strongly appealing to the taste of a broader audience. The favorite characters were folk-types, such as peasants, cooks, hen-pecked husbands, bragging soldiers, mean hags, in short, the stock types of popular comedy. Even the types of the *Commedia dell' Arte* could be seen in Jesuit plays. The abuse of these comic episodes became a subject of constant and fruitless complaint on the part of the Order's authorities and was condemned as a sign of spiritual decline. Nevertheless, full length comedies soon were performed which frequently degenerated into mere horse-play and buffoonery.

Such developments betrayed an ever increasing desire to enter-

[1] H. Schaller, *Die Welt des Barock* (1936) p. 52; cf. also W. Weisbach, *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation* (1921). A 17th century handbook of allegories which gives detailed instructions as to their proper stage appearance, is the Jesuit's Jacob Masen's (1606-1681) *Speculum Imaginum veritatis occultae (Mirror of Images of Occult Truth),* 1650.

tain and amuse the audiences and eventually led to one of the most curious features of the Jesuit theatre, the ballet. The center of such activities was the famous *Collège Louis Le Grand* in Paris. There Jesuit priests hastened to declare that dancing was an honest and decent pursuit and even defended the passion for it which had seized the elegant society of the day.[1] The Jesuit, Claude Francois Menestrier (1631-1705), in his treatise *Des Ballets anciens et modernes* (1682), discussed the history and theory of the dance, quoting as examples several ballets performed at the Paris college. Another Jesuit, Joseph de Jouvancy (1643-1719), defended the choreographic art as "an entertainment worthy of a well-educated man and a useful exercise for youngsters."[2] It became common practice to give a ballet after the tragedy, frequently dealing with a subject similar to that of the preceding play. Sometimes the ballet was divided into acts which were performed between those of the serious drama as did Molière in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670). Even ballets were supposed to serve the Jesuits' religious purpose. Consequently we find dancing saints and martyrs, a bizarre sight indeed. Death appeared as a dancer as did emperors and heroes. Everything began to dance: stars, statues, trees, satyrs, furies, Indians, bears and monkeys.

Such activities, together with the increase of comedy and music, provided the opponents of the Order with welcome material for their polemics. The Jesuit school theatre entered its third period (1700-1773) with internal disintegration as well as external opposition pointing to the previously mentioned decline. Moreover, the gradual approach of the Age of Reason and Enlightenment brought about far-reaching changes in the intellectual climate of Europe. The re-examination of all values[3] questioned the ideological foundations upon which the Order had been based and finally its foes triumphed when the Society was suppressed by the Pope.

The increasing influence of Classicism constituted a threat to Jesuit dramatic technique. Yet eighteenth-century Jesuits did try to conform to the dogma of the Three Unities. They restricted the number of characters and simplified the productions. In the Age of Reason there were to be no more apparitions and visions, no more devils, magicians and sorcerers. By renouncing these attractive

[1] In 1661 Louis XIV founded the *Académie de Danse* in Paris. Jesuit opinions on dancing are collected in E. Boysse, *Le Théâtre des Jesuits* (Paris 1880) p. 85*ff*.

[2] *cf.* E. Boysse, *op. cit.* p. 86; also L. -V. Gofflot *Théâtre au Collège du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Paris 1907), p. 115.

[3] For an admirable discussion of this intellectual revolution *cf.* Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la Conscience Européenne,* 1680-1715, 3 vols. (Paris 1935).

features, the Jesuit theatre lost its lure and audiences began to dwindle rapidly. Very soon the performances gave enlightened observers the impression of grotesque and even ludicrous anachronisms.[1] Although Jesuit dramatists strove to compromise with the new age, their theatre as an instrument of religious propaganda had lost its significance.

Throughout the two hundred years of their school theatre's history, Jesuit priests not only wrote plays but also produced them, thus transforming themselves into directors, designers, technicians, and even dance instructors. Consequently, they also dealt with theatrical subjects in books, whose wide circulation was by no means restricted to Jesuit circles. There are so many Jesuit treatises on dramatic theory and on playwriting that it would be impossible even to enumerate them in this short survey. The most notable Jesuit study on theatre architecture and stage painting is contained in Andrea Pozzo's (1642-1709) *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum.*[2] The theory and techniqque of acting was discussed by Joseph de Jouvancy,[3] and Francois Lejay (1657-1734),[4] among others. *The Dissertatio de actione scenica* by Franciscus Lang (1645-1725), contains detailed instructions on the training of actors, on stage movements and gestures, on speech, and on the principles of directing.[5]

The stage form used by the Jesuits was at first a combination of medieval and Renaissance elements. Behind a neutral platform three or four compartments were erected. These, equipped with curtains, could be used either independently as single stages, or simultaneously as the *Mansiones* of the Passion Plays. This stage type has survived in the Oberammergau Passion Play.[6] During the Seventeenth Century, however, the picture frame stage was adopted almost universally. A permanent setting, composed of

[1] *cf.* the sarcastic remarks about a Jesuit performance in F. Nicolai's *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz* (1784), v. IV. p. 560*ff*; v. XI. 1, p. 29.

[2] Published between 1693 and 1700. Other Jesuit treatments of stage design may be found in F. Aguilonius' *Optica* (1613); J. Dubreuil's *La Perspective Pratique* v. III (1649); F. M. Dechales' *Cursus seu mundus Mathematicus* (1674); *cf.* G. Schoene, "*Die Entwicklung* der Perspektivbuehne von Serlio bis Galli-Bibiena," in *Theatergeschichtliche Forschungen*, v. XLIII (1933).

[3] *De ratio discendi et docendi* (1691).

[4] *Bibliotheca Rhetorum* (1725).

[5] Posthumously published in 1727; many excerpts in W. Flemming, *Geschichte des Jesuitentheaters in den Landen deutscher Zunge-Schriften der Gesellschaft fuer Theatergeschichte*, v. XXXII (1923); *cf.* also N. Scheid, "P. Fr. Langs Buechlein ueber die Schauspielkunst," in *Euphorion* v. VIII (1901), p. 57*ff*.

[6] A similar stage was used for the 18th century non-Jesuit Passion play at Schwaebisch-Gmuend, Germany, performed for the last time in 1803; *cf.* E. J. Eckard "Studien zur Buehnengeschichte der Renaissance" in *Theatergeschichtliche Forschungen*, v. XLI (1931), p. 83*ff*. For the Passion play presented in Spearfish, South Dakota, in the summer of 1941, the same stage type was used. The players were Catholic refugees from Southern Germany.

architectural elements, was used at the Paris college, where the stage was erected on one side of the courtyard.[1]

The sets and properties to be seen on Jesuit school stages were as varied as those used in the contemporary court theatre. Heaven, Hell, coronation halls, prisons, caverns, woods, gardens, deserts, military camps, seaports, streets and public squares appeared in never ending variety. Properties, such as furniture, statues, trees, altars and tents were commonly used. The stage machinery was elaborate. Trap doors released apparitions, smoke and flames; entire buildings could disappear; the wild sea with practicable waves was shown; palaces and columns crashed; ships sailed across the stage; on flying machines appeared the Holy Trinity, or Poesia riding on Pegasus; battles between heavenly and hellish spirits were fought in a sky alive with flying chariots, birds, and dragons; clouds opened up and closed again. The lighting effects included magic rays streaming from Heaven, and strange signs flashing across the darkened sky,[2] while fireworks and torch-dances ranked among the favorite features.

Considering that performances were given before audiences which consisted partly of the sophisticated court society, the student actors must have achieved a considerable degree of perfection. Their tasks were by no means easy. They not only had to portray characters of an unlimited variety but also to sing and to dance. The acting style was mostly formal and conventional, as in contemporary tragedy and opera. Sometimes, however, the Jesuit director plunged into grim realism, especially in scenes of death and torture. People were blinded and executed on the stage. In one play a puppet stuffed with pieces of flesh, blood and bones, was torn to pieces by wild dogs.[3] Costumes, sometimes made of costly materials, were spectacular. The musical tasks were carried out by the school orchestras to be found in all Jesuit colleges. Distinguished composers, like Orlando di Lasso (1530?-1594) and Johann Caspar Kerll (1625-1692), wrote original scores for Jesuit plays.[4]

Performances took place several times during the year, the main production being connected with the final examination. Political events, church holidays, or days celebrating the patrons of school

[1] *cf.* E. Boysse, *op. cit.* p. 63 f.; for illustration *cf.* the plates in L. -V. Gofflot, *op, cit.* and in R. Fueloep-Miller, *The Power and Secret of the Jesuits* (1930).

[2] *The Laterna Magica,* described by the Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), in his *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1671), was used for stage effects.

[3] *cf.* W. Flemming, *Geschichte des Jesuitentheaters op. cit.* p. 169. For the Baroque tendency toward spectacles of cruelty *cf.* W. Weisbach, *op. cit.* p. 34*f.*

[4] *cf.* Max Wittwer, *Die Musikpflege im Jesuitenorden* (Thesis Greifswald 1934).

and country, provided additional opportunities to display the colleges' theatrical achievements. The public performances were carefully prepared and dress rehearsals were held before an audience of invited dignitaries.

There can be no doubt that the Jesuit school theatre exerted widespread influence in many directions. Other religious Orders, like the Benedictines,[1] the Augustinians, the Piarists, took up theatrical activities modeled after Jesuit practices. The interrelations between Jesuit and contemporary Baroque drama have hardly been explored. Even Protestant playwrights were impressed and influenced by the Order's theatrical accomplishments.[2] Moreover, wide circles of the population whose theatrical experiences would otherwise have been restricted to the crude histrionics of strolling players were made aware of the theatre's spiritual power. Thus, the Jesuits immensely encouraged and influenced the development of the popular theatre in all Catholic countries. Its heritage has survived not only in the Oberammergau Passion Play but also in Emanuel Schikaneder's libretto of Mozart's *Magic Flute* (1791), in the fairy-tale plays of Ferdinand Raimund (1790-1836), and even in the Salzburg Festivals of recent years. Finally, the support, moral and financial, extended to the Jesuit school theatre by kings, princes and city governments indicates that the cultural and political possibilities of the stage were fully recognized. It is hardly a coincidence that the two first national theatres of consequence were founded in cities where Jesuit theatre tradition was strong—Paris and Vienna.

Many authors, later connected with the stage either as playwrights or as critics, received their first theatrical training in Jesuit schools: Molière, Pierre and Thomas Corneille, Lesage, Dancourt, Diderot, Voltaire. Equally impressive is the list of men who in their writings testified to the Order's high theatrical standards: Joost van den Vondel, Francis Bacon, Montaigne, Bossuet, Herder, Goethe.

Notwithstanding the Jesuits' vivid and active interest in and influence on the stage, their attitude toward the professional theatre was so hostile that their pupils were expressly forbidden to attend its presentations.

Even after this necessarily condensed presentation of some es-

[1] For the Benedictine school stage in Salzburg, Mozart wrote, at the age of 11, nine musical *intermezzi* to be inserted in the Latin school play *Apollo et Hyacinthus, seu Hyacinthi Metamorphosis* (performed May 13, 1767).

[2] *cf.* W. Harring, *Andreas Gryphius und das Drama der Jesuiten-Hermea.* v. V. (1905).

sential facts, the Jesuit school theatre would appear as a most fascinating phase of stage history. It was the first school theatre ever to aim consciously at reaching not only students but the entire population. Such aims disappeared completely after the suppression of the Order, when school dramatics lapsed into amateurish insignificance. Not until our own day has a school theatre, as we find it in the United States, succeeded in again assuming such importance in the life of its country; where in hundreds of colleges and universities the theatre is steadily reaching beyond the student to the general public.

THE MEDIEVAL PAGEANT WAGONS OF LOUVAIN

by

GEORGE R. KERNODLE

What did the medieval pageant wagons look like? Apparently no graphic record of them has come down to us from England where they were in extremely popular usage during the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Centuries. Fortunately, however, we can look at the pictures of similar pageant wagons built for the dramatic processions in Louvain. In 1594, the town clerk of Louvain, William Boonen, wrote an account of the city's splendid procession of that year and drew some thirty pictures of the characters and the wagons. His manuscript, known as the *Liber Boonen,* remained in the Louvain Library until 1914. When the Germans invaded Belgium, the Library was burned. Yet all of Boonen's work was not lost. In 1863, a small volume had been published reproducing his drawings in lithographs.[1] Although by 1594 the wagons of the traditional procession had been rebuilt with Renaissance and even Baroque decorative details, we may be sure that they still followed the same basic patterns that had been used for at least two centuries before. From these forgotten pictures we can reconstruct the production methods of a whole era of drama.

The great religious processions of the summer season were the pride of the commercial cities of France, Flanders, and England. At this time great fairs and markets were held in the cities for periods of one or two weeks and festivities were organized to at-

[1] Edward van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain* (Brussels and Louvain, 1863). Copies in British Museum and Harvard College Library.

tract customers from miles around. For the processions, the trade guilds built elaborate wagon floats to represent stories of biblical and local history. In Bruges, a procession, still a very important occasion in 1939, celebrated the bringing to Bruges of a vial of the Holy Blood, and the display of the relic was the climax of the procession. In York, Coventry, Lincoln, Newcastle, Chester, and dozens of smaller English cities, the procession celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi; and not only an elaborate procession but a whole series of plays, sometimes lasting three days, was presented in this processional manner.[1] In Freiburg and several other German cities, the early scenes of the Corpus Christi procession, from Adam and Eve and the Prophets of Christ through the Nativity and early life of Christ, were shown on wagon stages drawn in procession, but the final scenes, of the Passion and the Resurrection, were developed into full plays and presented before the cathedral at the conclusion of the procession. In the procession were representations of legendary giants and picturesque monsters. The audiences were enthralled, instructed, and entertained by what they saw; and the merchants laid up great credit in Heaven from the procession and great profits in this world from the fairs.

The Louvain Procession of Our Lady, the most popular of all the processions in Belgium, was first presented in 1490 on the birthday of the Virgin, September 8, to celebrate the victory over the invading Northmen in the year 891—a victory attributed to the intervention of the Virgin. In the Sixteenth Century the date was changed to the first Sunday in September and the festival was greatly expanded. The pageant wagons were rebuilt and elaborated; one of the Chambers of Rhetoric produced a play on a platform in the public square at the conclusion of the procession, and the *kermess* and fair were extended to cover the week before as well as the week following the sacred day.

On the eve of the procession, during a service in the cathedral, the miraculous image of the Virgin was brought from Her chapel and placed in the nave. Early the next morning, after Mass, the porters took the image to the square, and Our Lady Herself, escorted by the clergy and the faculty of the University, as we see in the first of the plates that follow, led the procession to the music of the city waits.

Like the Corpus Christi processions, the Pageant of Our Lady dramatized the salvation of Man through the coming of Jesus.

[1] M. Lyle Spancer, *Corpus Christi Pageants in England* (New York, 1911).

The first wagon of the procession showed the expulsion of Man from the Garden of Eden. This wagon, as shown by the second plate that follows, presented four symbols of a garden—a fence, a fountain, a gate, and a tree, and above the gate, on a kind of Elizabethan upper stage, an image of God was shown.

Instead of the usual Old Testament prophecies and prefigurations of Christ, the Louvain procession presented a half-allegorical introduction to Our Lady. First came thirty-four groups of people presenting thirty-four women of the Old Testament, each woman representing one quality possessed by the Virgin. Six of these women are shown in the third plate that follows. First, two warrior women; Jael, who killed Sisara with a nail, and the Woman of Thebes who killed Abimelech with a millstone; then, for other qualities of the Virgin, Ruth, Naomi, and the mothers of Samuel and of Samson. These women did not wear the contemporary costume of the Sixteenth Century but variations of a nymph costume that served equally for goddesses, Botticelli graces, pastoral nymphs, and women of the Bible. Each character, in typical medieval fashion, carried or wore some property as an identifying symbol. Just as each saint was painted with his symbol, so Sisara wore the nail on his head and Abimelech the millstone on his. In other parts of the procession, Jonah and the angel of Tobias each carried a fish in his hand. Besides this, each central character bore a banderole on which was written a motto or characteristic quotation. Only in the case of the mother of Samson does the artist include the banderole in our pictures.

After the Old Testament women came a second allegorical preparation for Our Lady: seven picturesque animals, each built to be carried by a man hidden inside, represented the Vices, each of which was ridden by a lady as a Virtue who, with the help of Our Lady, kept the Vices under control.

Then was shown the coming of Our Lady Herself. Represented by a living actress, She sat on top of the enormous wrought-iron Tree of Jesse, shown in the fourth plate that follows, which supposedly was issuing from the actor representing Jesse and could hold in its flowers thirty living children symbolizing kings and prophets. At the corners of the platform, holding identifying standards, sat the Four Sibyls who predicted the virgin birth of Christ.

The next pageant wagon, the most splendid, shown in the fifth plate that follows, depicted the presentation of the Virgin in the

Temple. Doubtless in the earlier processions the tower of the Temple was a tall Gothic spire.

The Annunciation wagon, shown in plate six that follows, was the loveliest. The simple scene was enclosed in the baldachin of four columns supporting a canopy—a pattern derived from the early altars and shrines.[1] That the form was a popular dramatic one is proven by its repetition on the Resurrection wagon shown in plate nine that follows. Many stages in churches, on platforms, and on wagons, used this form. On both the Annunciation and Resurrection wagons, it was a purely formal architectural frame, given Renaissance detail in the renovations of the 1550's. That it could be combined with more realistic detail is revealed in the pageant wagon of the Nativity, shown in plate eight that follows. Even so, the roof was a symbol of the heavens and held an image of God in the center and four angels at the top of the posts.

The pageant wagons of the Pentecost and the Assumption of the Virgin, shown in plates ten and eleven that follow, indicate that machines were as popular with the moving pageants as with the stationary stages. In one picture we can see the Sacred Flame, usually built of beaten copper or of gilt with a burning torch in the center, let down from the central tower with a rope manipulated by the man walking alongside the wagon. Even more elaborate was the *glory,* the machine for raising or lowering heavenly characters. In the other picture we can see the image of Mary being raised to join the Trinity in Heaven—just as, throughout the period, the image was raised in many churches at Mass on the Feast of the Assumption.

The last pageant wagon completed the story of Man's fall and redemption. A tall tower of four stories, see plate twelve that follows, carried the Nine Choirs of Angels, as an emblem of the paradise in store for Man. A group of historical characters and the great comic giants formed the last group. At the end of the procession, a giant St. Margaret and a giant St. George lorded it over a great comic dragon.

At the conclusion of the Louvain procession, as at Freiburg, Newcastle, and Florence, a play was put on in the public square.[2] In the thirteenth plate we see a scene from the Judgment of Solomon

[1] Neil O. Brooks, *The Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy, with Special Reference to the Liturgical Drama. University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature,* Vol. VII, No. 2 (May, 1921).

[2] E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* (Oxford, 1903), Vol. II, 134; Oskar Sengspiel, *Die Bedeutung der Prozessionen für das geistliche Spiel der Mittelalters in Deutschland, Germanistische Abhandlungen,* Heft 66 (Breslau, 1932).

as played by the Chamber of Rhetoric of Louvain. The stage, a platform before a formal architectural façade, was similar to the other stages of the Chambers of Rhetoric and, of course, to the Elizabethan and Spanish stages.[1] This last is the only one of our pictures that has been altered by the nineteenth-century lithographer. From other prints and pictures of the times, he has drawn in the audience and the buildings around the square. Boonen drew only the stage itself.

Whether with the Renaissance details of the late Sixteenth Century of the Gothic details of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth; whether with the formal baldachin or the realistic houses, caves, or Hell-mouths; whether stopped along the way for whole little plays, as in England, or drawn without pause as on the Continent—these pageant wagons expressed the religious devotion of the people and, at the same time, the pride of the great guilds of the rising commercial cities of Western Europe.

[1] The interrelationship of the different stages of the Sixteenth Century I discuss in a forthcoming book, *From Art to Theatre*.

THE PLATES

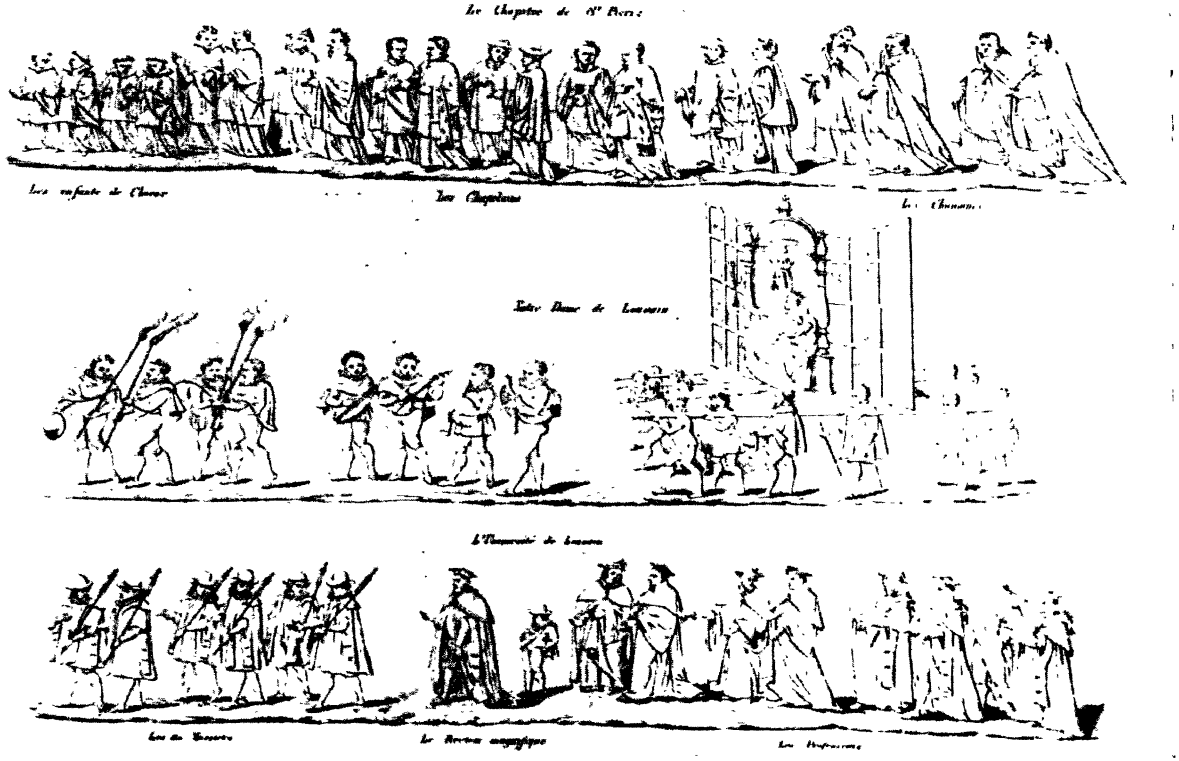


Plate 1. *The Beginning of the Procession, led by the Image of Our Lady escorted by the clergy and the faculty of the University to the music of the city waits.*

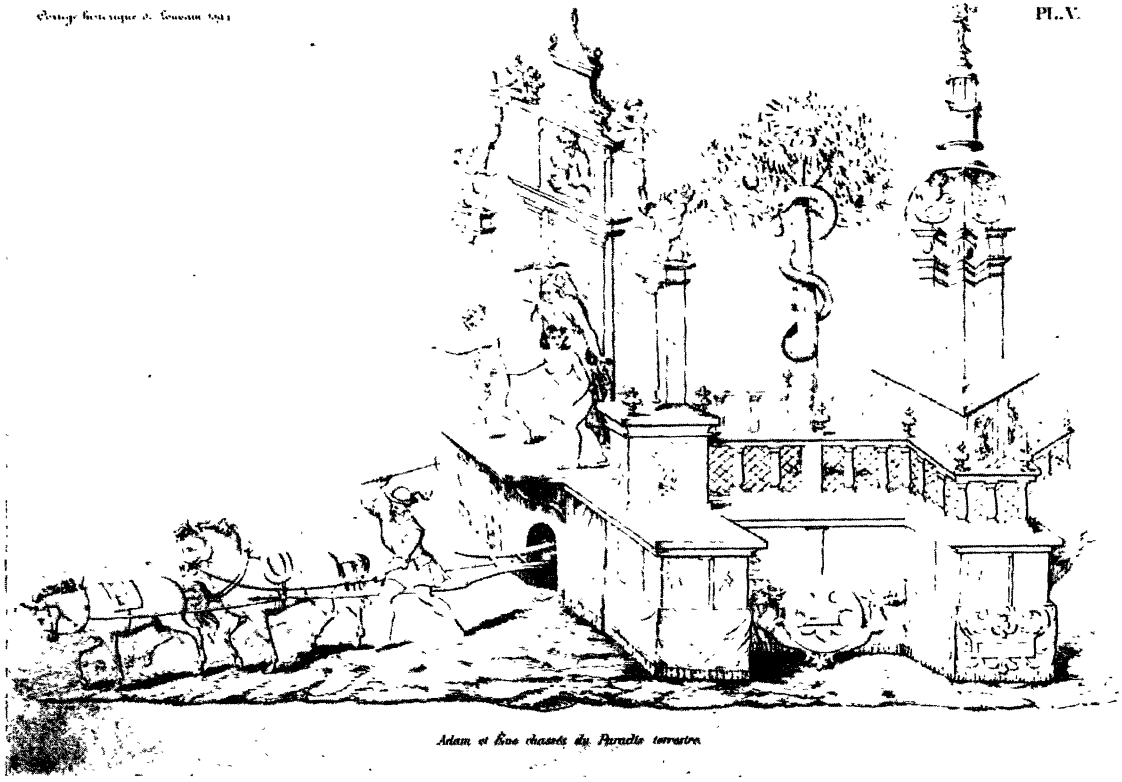


Plate 2. *The First Pageant Wagon: The Expulsion from Paradise.*



Plate 3. *Part of the Series of Thirty-Four Women of the Old Testament: Jael, the Woman of Thebes, Naomi, Ruth, the Mother of Samson, and Anne, the Mother of Samuel.*

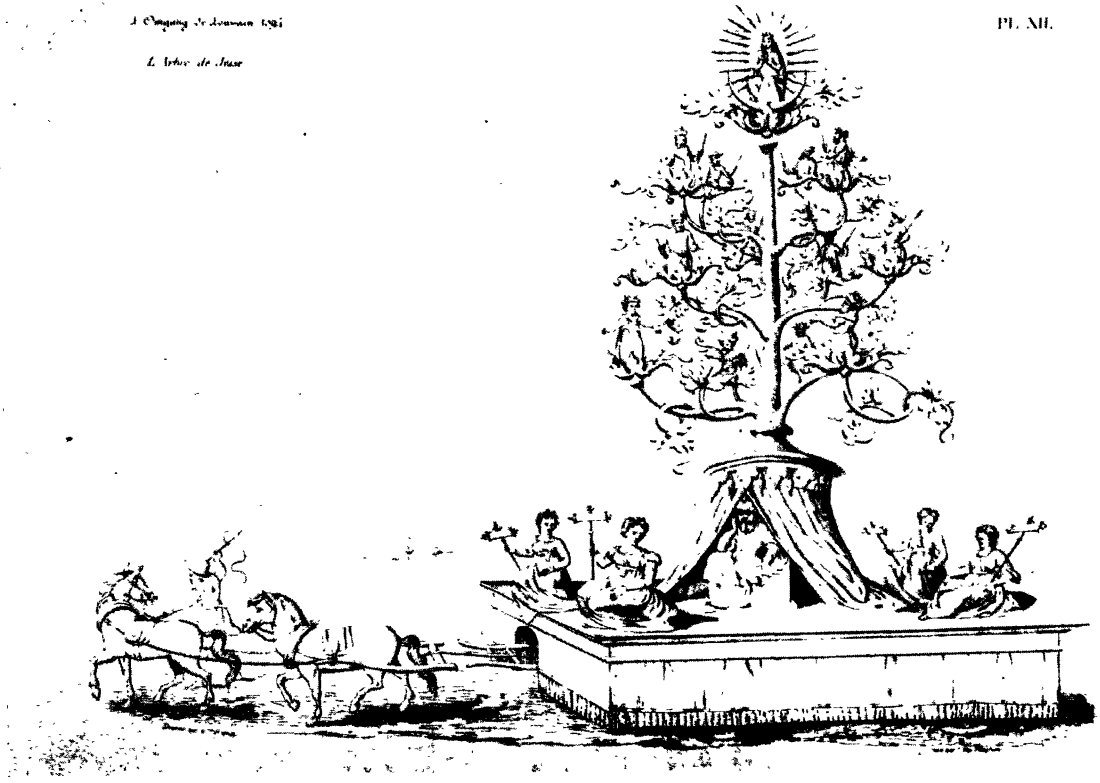


Plate 4. *The Tree of Jesse, with living actors as Jesse, the Kings and Prophets, the Virgin, and Four Sibyls.*

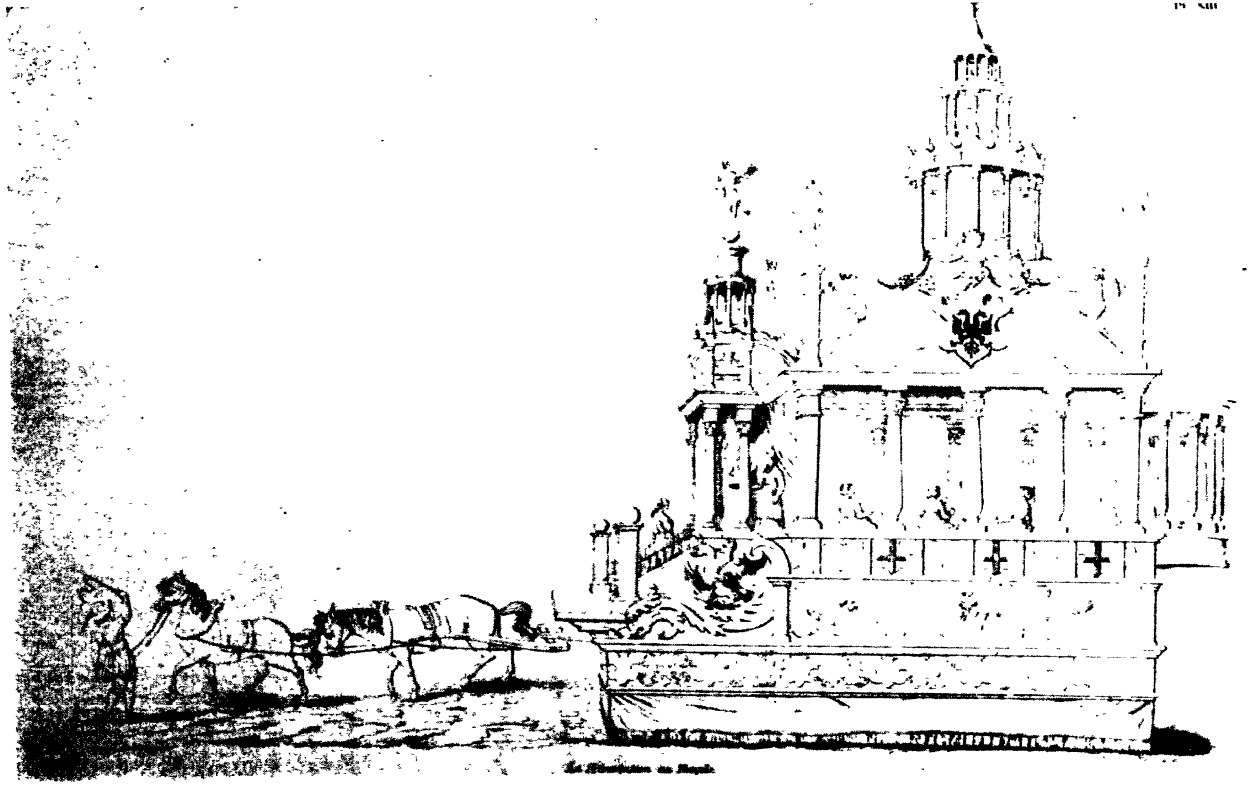


Plate 5. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple.*

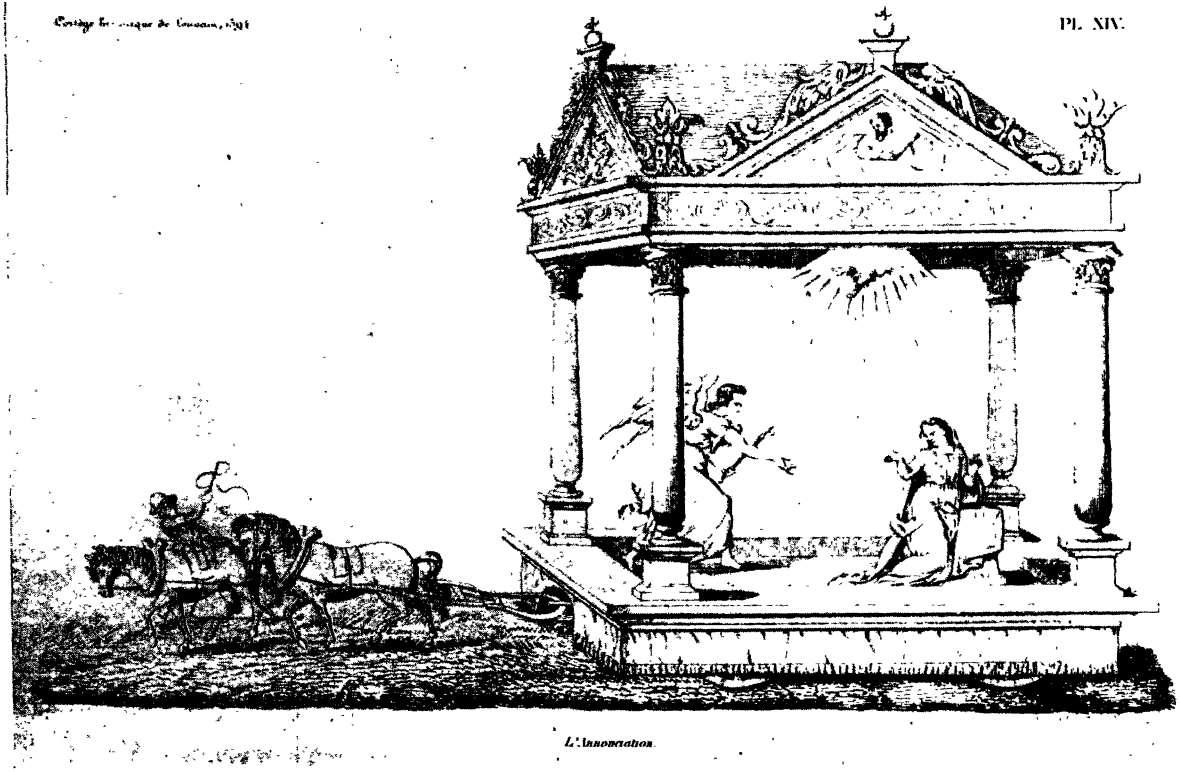


Plate 6. *The Annunciation.*

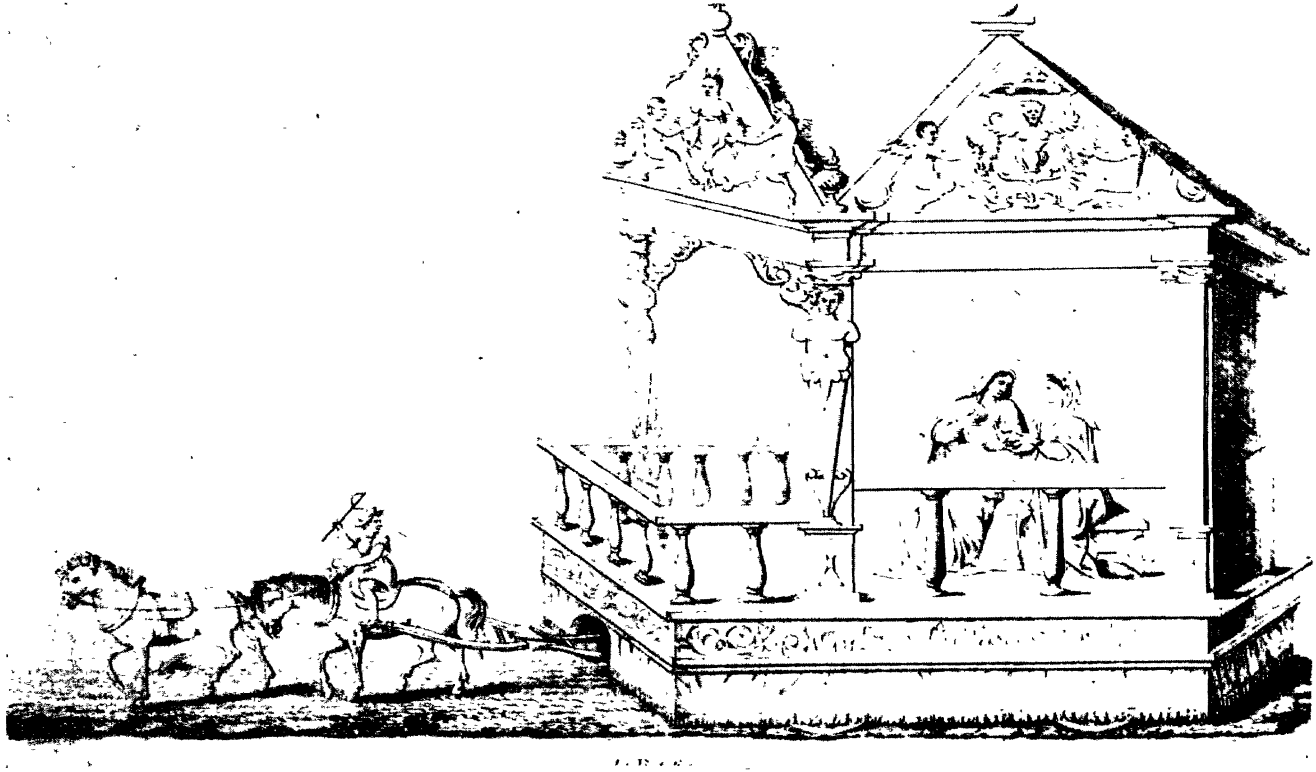


Plate 7. *The Visitation*: *The Virgin and Elizabeth*

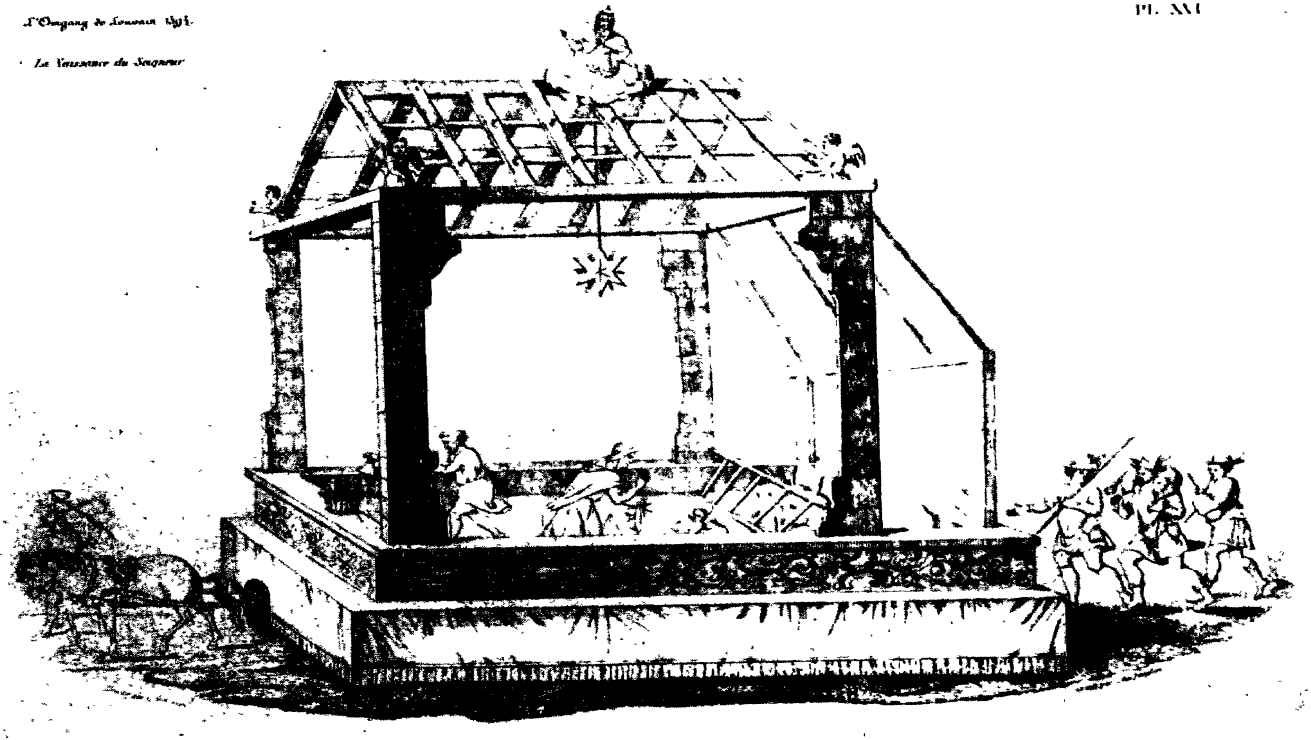


Plate 8. *The Nativity.*

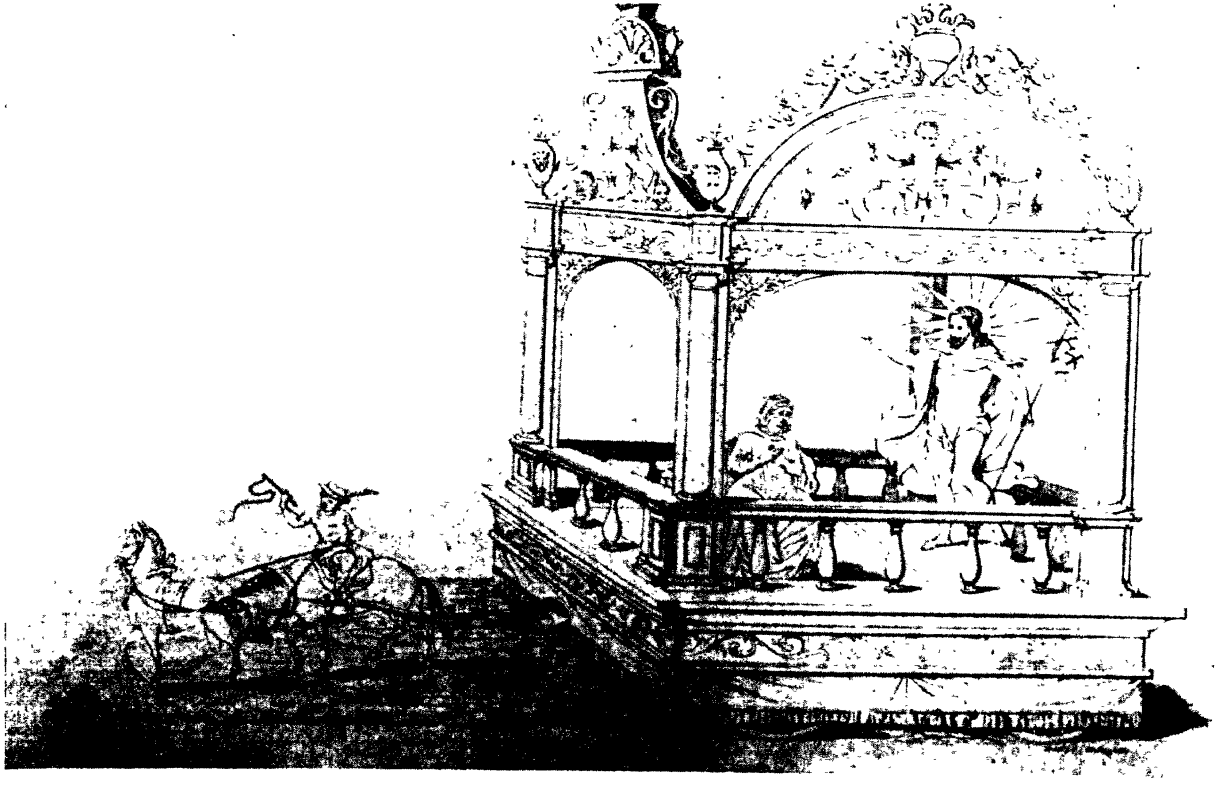


Plate 9. *The Resurrection.*

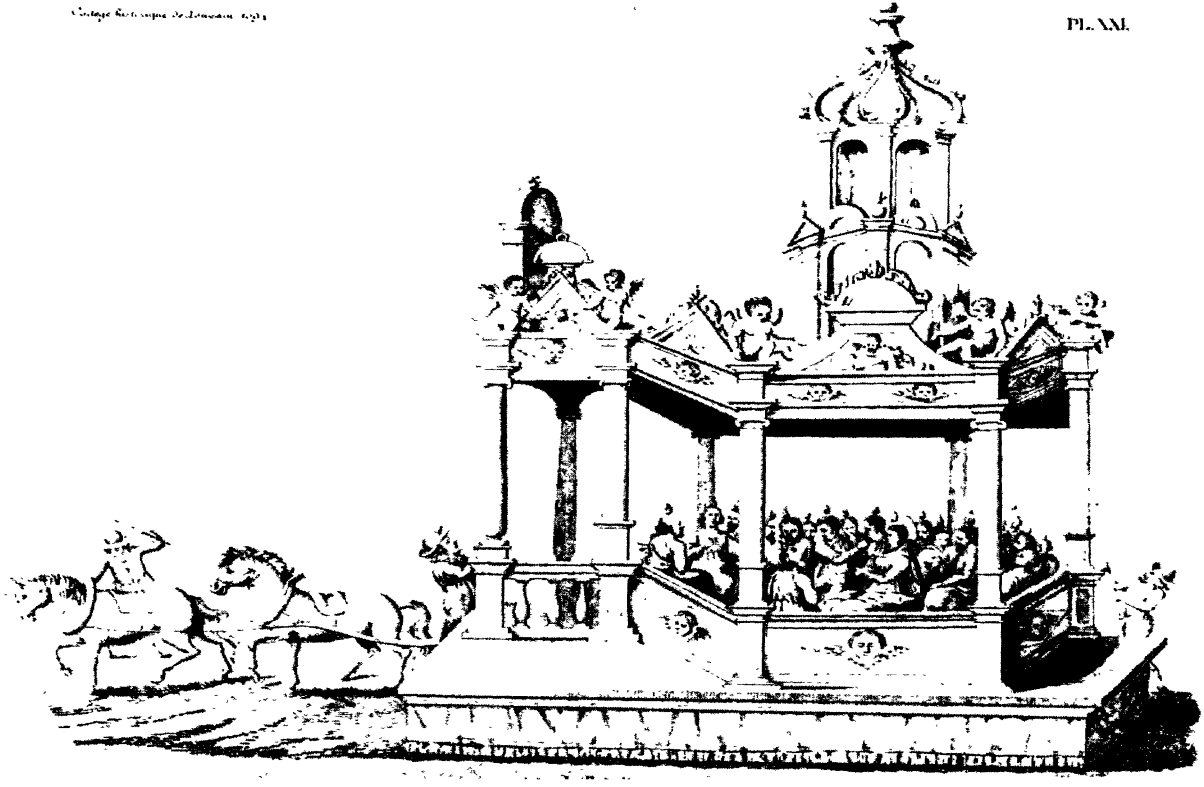


Plate 10. *The Pentecost, with a machine to show the descent of the Holy Spirit.*

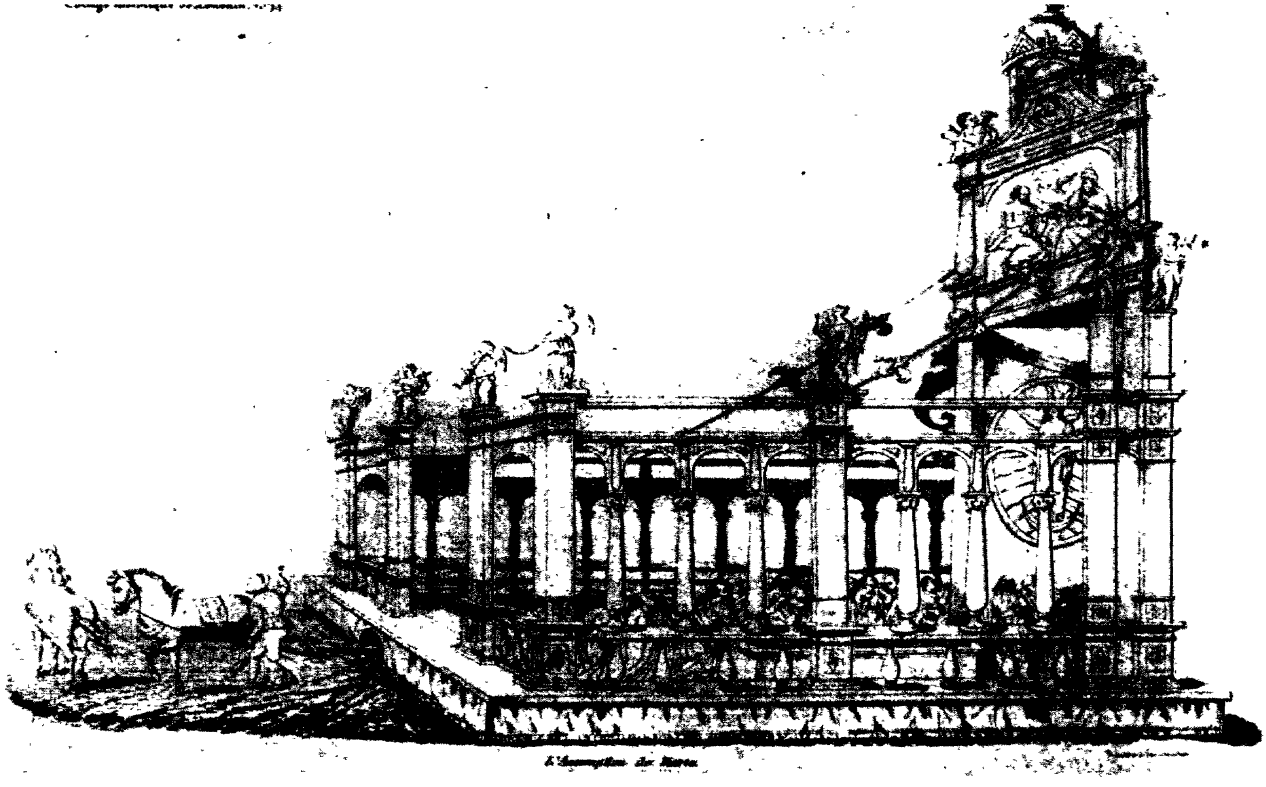


Plate 11. *The Assumption of the Virgin: an Image in a "glory" drawn up by ropes to the Trinity above.*

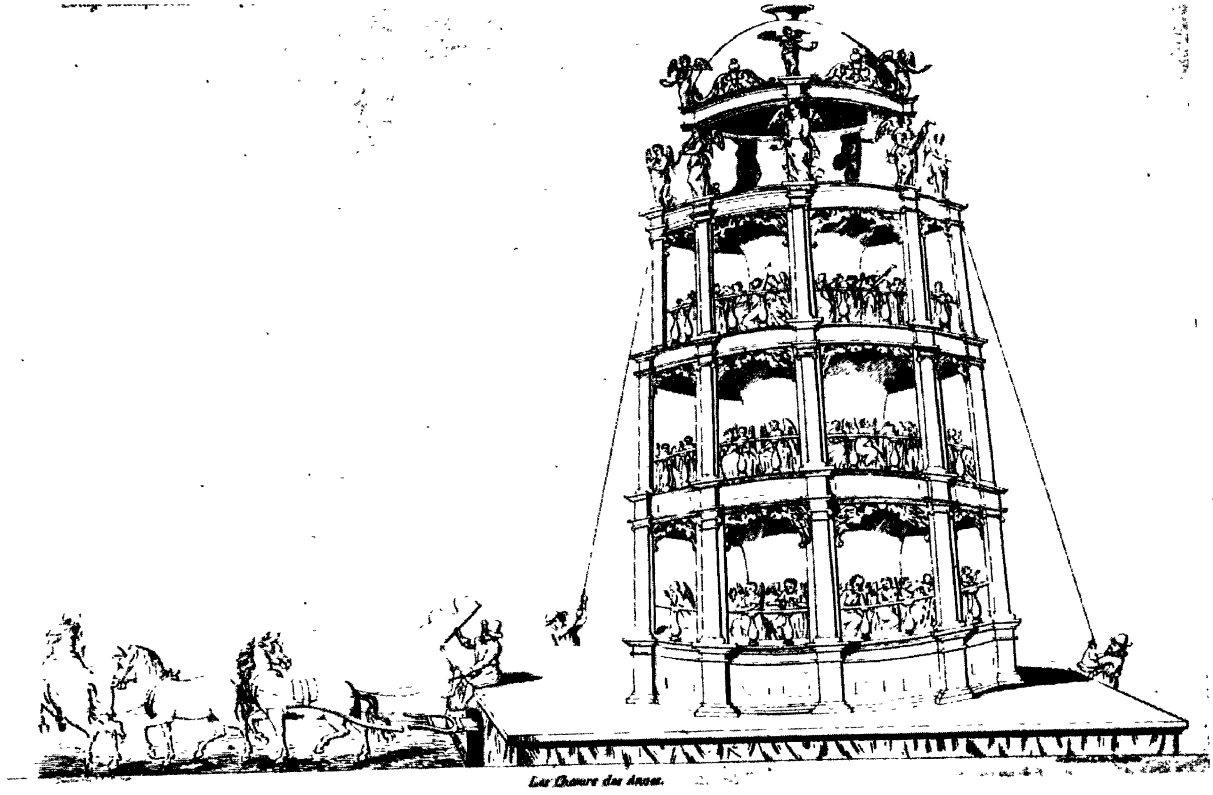


Plate 12. *The Nine Choirs of Angels.*

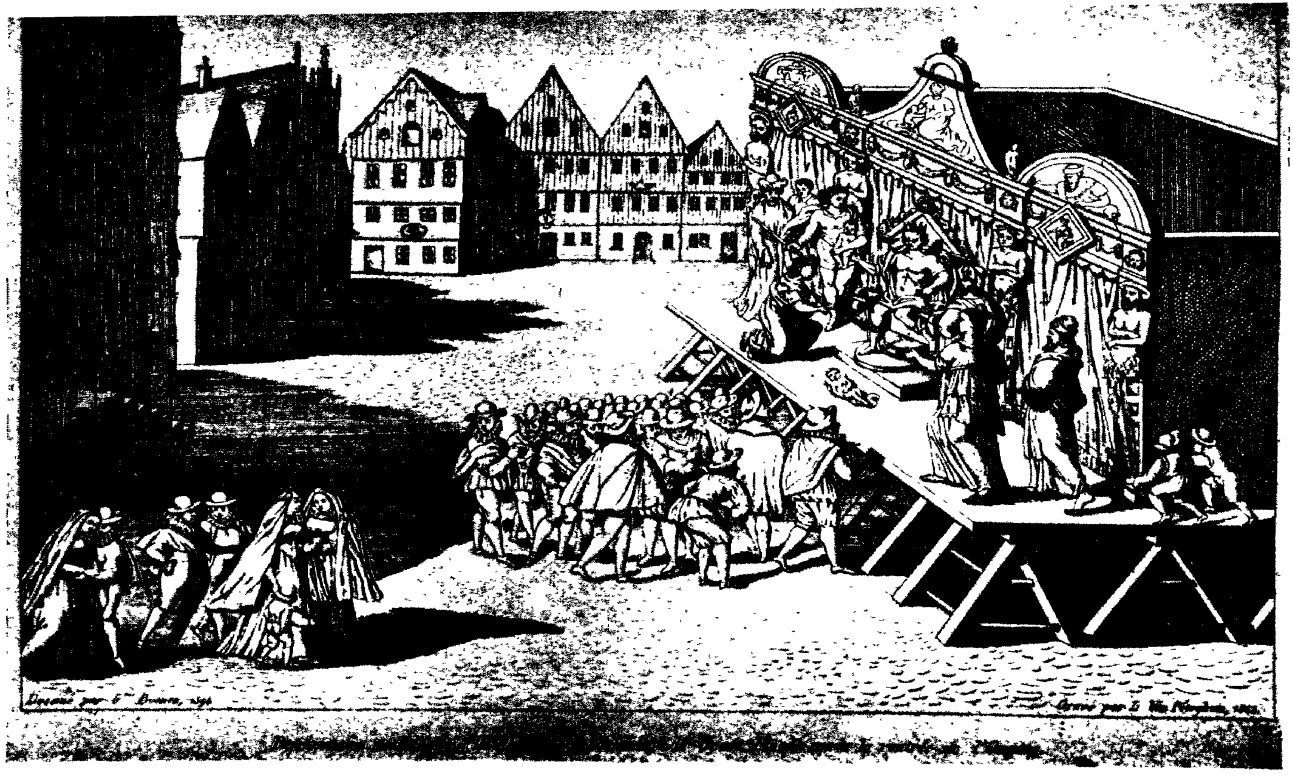


Plate 13. *The Judgment of Solomon, as played in the Public Square at the conclusion of the Procession by the Chamber of Rhetoric.*



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Franz Rapp

WARTIME DRAMA IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE



UNITED KINGDOM—*by* ALLARDYCE NICOLL

In the month of March 1944 not one, but two *Hamlets* were playing in London: and perhaps that fact may be taken as symbolic of the English stage after more than four years of war.

Not many would have prophesied in 1939 that even a single production of Shakespeare's tragedy could have proved popular. Dark thoughts of a theatrical blackout or equally gloomy reflections on a possible spate of meaningless 'escapist' farces were in most minds in those days. Memories of what happened to the stage during the last war and anxious speculations concerning the coming terror from the skies were then the dominant considerations.

On the day war was declared, I was in Malvern—home of the the Malvern Festival, that series of annual performances inaugurated through the inspiration of Sir Barry Jackson and presided over by the indomitable George Bernard Shaw. On that day I spoke at a meeting (arranged many weeks before), the audience at which was composed mainly of actors, and I know what was in their minds that afternoon.

We met in the garden of the house where Jenny Lind spent her last days. Over our heads an exquisitely clear sky formed an azure canopy and birds trilled in the bushes around us. The ironic brilliance of the afternoon was, however, belied by a low intermittent rumbling coming from beyond a line of trees—telling of army lorries speeding to unknown destinations.

War was upon us. At any moment we thought word might come of air raids on London. In anticipation of such attacks news had just come over the radio that the Home Secretary had ordered the closing of all theatres.

For the actors gathered there it was a dark occasion. To the general feeling of suspense shared by all, there was for them the particular gloom of knowing that a physical and spiritual blackout had blanketed the stages on whose boards they had their real beings.

What precisely I said at that meeting I do not recall, save that I remember prophesying that drama was a thing so close to the heart

of every human being as to defy any attempts (however unwilling) at its extinguishment; that the actors, not the theatre buildings, formed the true core of the drama's being; and that soon either light would once more flood the scenes and allow the actors to appear before their familiar audiences or else the players themselves would let the theatres be, would take their tragedies and their comedies anywhere, indoors or out-of-doors, where they might find a suitable platform and space for the spectators.

Prophecy is generally a dangerous pastime, but on this occasion reality succeeded in doubling the promise of my prognostication.

Within a week a statutory order permitted the theatres to reopen, in "neutral and reception areas," up to 10 p.m.; within two weeks a general reopening was allowed except in one congested "defined area" around Piccadilly Circus (where closing-time was fixed at 6 p. m.); within three weeks the time-limits were lifted altogether. Not only so, but at the same time some bolder spirits were making plans for bringing drama to the people, were talking of emulating the itinerant players of the Elizabethan age, were laying the basis for sceneryless tours, through England's villages and market towns.

Necessarily, the work of the dramatists has been seriously interrupted during the time from those days to the present. On playwrights young and old new duties have been imposed and, when it is remembered that no drama can be composed piecemeal in odd moments snatched from other affairs, or turned out, as a sonnet can, in the heat of a passionate moment, it is not surprising that in this field the works of creative artistry are few. Rather is it a matter for astonishment that the theatre has been able to produce, under existing conditions, a *Blithe Spirit* and a *Mr. Bolfry*—plays destined certainly to be remembered long after their initial production.

If new plays are not many, however, the theatre in Britain not only shows itself as alive as it was before 1939 but in many important respects has attained a new spirit, a fresh enthusiasm and hitherto undreamed-of aims.

Night after night, every one of London's forty theatres has been happily putting up the 'house-full' boards and rarely have audiences in the metropolis been given such an array of rich dramatic fare from which to make choice. An examination of recent offerings proves this conclusively. There are, of course, the musical comedies and the farces, perennial ingredients of any theatrical season. The American stage is well represented with offerings as various as *There*

Shall Be No Night, Panama Hattie, Junior Miss, My Sister Eileen and *Arsenic and Old Lace.* If musical comedy draws its crowds, so do Masefield's *Tragedy of Nan,* Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* and *Heartbreak House,* Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows,* Congreve's *Love for Love,* Wilde's *An Ideal Husband,* Sierra's *Cradle Song,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Richard III, Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice.* Opera, with new productions of Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and Humperdinck's *Hänsel and Gretel,* is proving brilliantly popular, while ballet (flourishing despite the lack of male dancers) has won a public far beyond the scope of the 'balletomanes' of the past.

One thing has been noted by almost everyone interested in the London stage. Although the last months have shown an increased demand for musical comedy, due no doubt to the large numbers of servicemen on leave who are crowding London's streets, there is a startling difference in tone between the tastes of 1914-1918 and those of 1940-1944. During the height of the blitz, lunch-hour versions of Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies ('potted Shakespeare') were eagerly attended, and an examination of the dramatic offerings of these four years indicates a remarkably high percentage of serious plays which proved popular. The dark and gloomy forecasts of the pessimists—who thought that only the light, the frivolous and the 'escapist' would flourish—have been thoroughly discredited by actuality. For that reason London's two recent *Hamlets* are indeed to be regarded as truly symbolic. The metropolis has had a rich repertory during this time and it is obvious that, while rightly the theatre has been offering some fare calculated to please those weary from toil and unable to cope with more serious mental food, it has also been providing, in answer to an insistent public demand, material for thought and passion.

Especially significant has been the lack of interest in the formerly popular 'drawing room' comedies. These may have satisfied in earlier days, but now the temper of the public has changed. The trivial social escapades no longer hold interest, interest in the commonplace has waned, so that, as one Lancashire man put it, the the audiences want either "something for a good laugh or else summat wi' a bit of meat to it." A healthy development, this, for the stage has for too long been dominated by the cup and saucer and cocktail glass of sentimental mediocrity.

Perhaps, however, for a true picture of what is happening in the British dramatic world of today one should turn not to London but

to the 'provinces.' That London, despite the heavy damage wrought to its buildings and despite the fact that wartime conditions have vastly altered its typical population, should have set so high a standard is cause for hope and encouragement, but if we are to think beyond the present and guess at what is to come, there are many things outside London which, though less heralded and publicly discussed than the latest Shaftesbury Avenue productions, promise even richer things for the future.

Before the war had entered its second week, the concept of the Pilgrim Players had been born. This group of actors decided that what the times needed was a company, no member of which should receive more than bare living expenses, prepared to travel and perform anywhere—in schoolroom or parish hall as occasion might serve. Its repertory, they decided, should consist entirely of plays of a religious or 'philosophical' character.

At the same time, other minds were at work. Quite apart from the obviously natural desire to provide entertainment for the services—expressed in the development of ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association), the equivalent of the entertainments section of the USO—there came other desires for the development of cultural activities among civilians. Some of these took practical expression in the form of individual efforts, such as that of Myra Hess in organising sixpenny (12 cent) concerts in the National Gallery, denuded of its masterpieces for the duration.

Since these concerts were given by world-famous artists and since they took place at lunch hours, no wonder may be expressed at their success, but, wonder or no, they proved to the most skeptical that serious art, presented at times and prices within the limits of meagre pocketbooks, was an urgent need of the times.

On January 1, 1940 various interests of this kind came together. The idea that inspired the Pilgrim Players and Myra Hess' concerts was in the air, and, in a New Year's resolution, took practical shape by the establishment of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA).

Of all recent British developments in the field of theatre, music and the arts, this without the slightest shadow of a doubt is the most significant, having not only an immediate wartime value, but also an enduring quality which, unquestionably, will prove of lasting significance.

At the beginning, CEMA was no more than a private association of enthusiasts who dreamed of bringing art to the people. Fed

with the vision of giving everyone the opportunity for seeing interesting plays, hearing good music, gaining appreciation of the work of living artists, these enthusiasists set their eyes on the 'provinces'—on those smaller towns which had not known of these things in the past.

Very humbly they began, still unsure of how precisely they might best bring their ideals to realisation, determined to move cautiously, step by experimental step. Out of their first grant from the Pilgrim Trust they provided a small subsidy for the Pilgrim Players; later they financed a tour of *Medea* and *Macbeth,* arranged by Sybil Thorndike, in Welsh mining villages; concert engagements were arranged for, too, and movable exhibitions of modern art.

Except for those areas actually served by these tours, it cannot be said that at that time CEMA's activities attracted a great deal of general attention, yet it was on the basis of the work it accomplished between January and September 1940 that the Council's first triumph was built.

In the late autumn of that year the Battle of Britain raged in the skies. Toiling by day, hundreds of thousands of Londoners—all those not actually engaged in fighting the flames—were forced to seek shelter as the early winter darkness descended on the city. Theatres were closed. The normal ways of life were broken.

Here came CEMA's opportunity. With experience behind it and with an already tried machinery, it was able to organise 'flying squad' entertainments and, at a time when virtually all artistic life lay dormant, it, and it alone, kept in vibrant operation music, art and the theatre. Its actors needed no scenery; they were prepared to perform anywhere—and hence those who had flocked to Underground shelter or dark church crypt found the opportunity of listening to the words denied them in the shuttered theatres.

If CEMA's original purpose had been merely to provide entertainment, it would not have succeeded in meeting the requirements of these days. No doubt any kind of relaxation would have been welcomed, but those were days when something more was needed than a music-hall comedian or a jazz orchestra, whose tunes might have jangled harshly amid the noise of aerial bombardment. Men's emotions were stirred and something larger, something deeper was demanded.

Since CEMA's whole stress was, and is, on work of artistic and cultural value, since it had Shakespeare in its repertory and dramas

of the kind sponsored by the Pilgrim Players, it was able, at that moment, to meet not only a general but a very particular need.

What it succeeded in accomplishing during those troublous months won it respect and fame—how much fame and respect being shown by the fact that, breaking entirely with tradition, the Board of Education took it under its aegis and made of it an official organisation. Starting as a wholly private group, it now has approval and support from the Government.

Year by year, since those heavy days of the winter of 1940, it has been growing in strength. Apart from the many concert groups it sponsors and apart from the many art exhibitions it has on tour, it now directly subsidises about a dozen dramatic companies, guarantees others (for example, the Old Vic) against loss up to certain amounts, acts as its own manager of Britain's first municipal theatre —the Theatre Royal at Bristol, and encourages various civic ventures, such as the Perth Repertory Company and the new Glasgow Citizens Theatre.

What CEMA has done since its first inception on New Year's Day 1940 is a lengthy story which someone some time will no doubt record in a printed volume. Here it is possible only to summarise what its efforts in general have succeeded in accomplishing. First, it has shown that much good may be done by judicious government sponsorship of artistic endeavour. Second, it has revealed how badly served the smaller towns were in art, music and theatre. Third, it has demonstrated that 'the play's the thing' and that simple, honest productions of good dramas have a wide appeal. Fourth, it has demonstrated the close and inevitable connections between formal 'education' and the presentation of artistic masterpieces. Fifth, it has already been largely responsible for the setting up of one municipal theatre and is encouraging other similar projects. Lastly, it has set up a machinery which (with some modifications no doubt) will certainly continue to function in peacetime as an important element in British artistic life.

There was nothing like this in 1918. If a graph were made of the theatre's strength during the past thirty years, it would show a sharp downward movement from 1914 to 1924, followed by a slow advance during the next sixteen years, and then suddenly it would show a remarkable rise between 1940 and 1944. 'The drama's laws the drama's patrons give' is an old and a true adage. What has happened during the past four years is that the scope of Britain's patrons of the drama has been widened beyond all

knowledge and that all have been granted rich opportunities for seeing the best and the worthiest that the stage has to offer. With this as basic inspiration one may confidently look forward to the time when the dramatists, recalled from wartime duties, provide for these new and vital audiences works worthy of their applause.

CANADA—*by* RICA MC LEAN FARQUHARSON

Under peacetime conditions, Canada is essentially a country of well-established, well-organised Little Theatres. Good professional productions can be seen in Canadian cities during 'runs' of one and two weeks, and at one and two-night 'stands' in the smaller centres. These productions stem from New York. As yet, Canada has no professional producing centre of its own.

The first shock of war momentarily broke the ranks of Canada's theatre workers. Some of their organisations went down, primarily, because they were drained of able man power. One of the chief casualties was the Dominion Drama Festival which was founded by Lord Bessborough in 1933 to encourage a national drama. Other theatre groups hesitated briefly, got their sense of direction, then their ranks quickly closed and began moving in a direction related to the war effort.

The first entertainment activities in Canada directly related to the war effort were sponsored by Citizens' Committees, also called Co-ordinating Councils. Wherever possible these Citizens' Committees joined hands with the established drama leagues and Little Theatre groups throughout the country in an endeavour to entertain the servicemen in barracks, camps and manning pools.

In addition to the general problem created by man-power and material shortages, many Little Theatres faced special problems. For instance, the active Little Theatre in Halifax was taken over by the Air Force at the beginning of the war and Air Force members, not in active service, joined the Halifax Concert Parties Guild to help entertain the troops. But the Halifax group, like many others, had to learn by doing. Its first production, *George and Margaret,* received a half-hearted reception. War-consciousness, naturally, runs high in Halifax and, in order to succeed with its entertainment efforts, the group had to turn to things that are light, fast, changing and glamorous.

On the Pacific Coast, the Vancouver Little Theatre faced a different problem. Many of the members of its drama groups felt that all theatre activities should be suspended for the duration of the war. Nevertheless, plans went ahead for the Little Theatre's hundredth production, scheduled for December 1941. The opening coincided with the city's first blackout. The house was closed down but, after a month, it was reopened with simplified stage sets and curtains for flats. Today it is playing to larger audiences than ever. *Watch on the Rhine* and other plays are being taken to the troops along with service shows. Its production of *Arsenic and Old Lace* earned $2,000 for the Milk for Britain Fund. The favorite plays of the Vancouver audiences are: *Accent on Youth, Philadelphia Story, Susan and God, The Guardsman, The Importance of Being Earnest, Ladies in Retirement* and *Autumn Crocus.*

Edmonton in Alberta, with its Canada-United States-Alaska link, has become Canada's biggest 'American' city. The first problem its Little Theatre faced was the planning of its productions for troop entertainment. *Tony Draws a Horse* drew riotous applause in the barracks; *Ladies in Retirement,* playing in a downtown theatre, drew 'catcalls.' In 1942 a policy of light entertainment failed. At present, both types of entertainment succeed.

Due to the American 'invasion,' Edmonton has hundreds of people with money to spend. The city has become a 'gold-mine' for those with entertainment to sell. Actors and directors have flooded into Edmonton from all over. *The Eve of St. Mark* had three leading men from the American forces. All the 'Yank' generals came; everybody sang two national anthems; everybody loved it. Edmonton says, "It's wonderful! The lack of men doesn't bother us—we have the 'Yanks.' "

On the Canadian prairies the tremendous enlistment, and the huge feeding job being done by the farmers have not blotted out the drama. The Western Canada Theatre Conference, under the direction of K. W. Gordon, still offers prizes each year for original plays, sees that they are produced, and that the authors receive royalties.

St. John, New Brunswick, felt the impact of war sooner than inland cities. With the United States still neutral and the 'lifeblood of England' flowing from east coast ports, the people of St. John expected token air raids at least. At first, there was a feeling against unnecessary gatherings, but a feeling that the Theatre Guild of St. John should help keep alive those things that were being kicked about and killed in Europe was even stronger. When it became

impossible to find casts for plays, studio evenings were filled out with talks on the theatre. Performances of farcical one-act plays, and, occasionally, of some experimental plays were repeated for the troops.

By the second year of the war, conditions had become stabilized and interest in the theatre really revived. Now, the Guild is in the most active period of its history. The plays it produces are written mostly by Guild members and its productions which have raised funds for war purposes are: *Nothing of Importance, Devil Take the Hindmost, Fresh Fields* and *Quiet Wedding*. St. John, working with a Citizens' Committee, has done a tremendous job of entertaining the troops about the city.

At Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, long famous for its development of Canadian drama, the Kingston Drama Group abruptly suspended activity at the beginning of the war. Even the Faculty Players, composed of members of the University's Staff and their wives and children, became inactive due to the pressure of war. The only plays presented publicly were: the nineteenth-century melodrama, *The Game of Life; Margin for Error;* and *Love from a Stranger* which was done in collaboration with the Students' Drama Guild, concluding its forty-fourth season of continuous activity.

But, the summer theatre of Queen's University operated by the Division of Drama in the School of Fine Arts has actually expanded since the war began. The plays performed for the R. A. F. at Collins Bay include two first productions in North America—Hamilton's *Gas Light* (*Angel Street*) *and* Afigenov's *Distant Point;* a first production in Canada—Kenwar's *Cry Havoc;* and Goodrich's *Yes or No*.

Productions of Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas are other Queen's University high lights of theatre activity.

London Little Theatre, formed in 1935, had built up a membership of 1800 before the war. This dropped to 1600 and did not pass 1700 until the 1942-1943 season when it jumped to 2200; by the 1943-1944 season it had reached 3400. At present, the demand for tickets is so great that when the Little Theatre puts on three-night 'runs,' it has to close with a waiting list of 500. All this happens in an Ontario city of 85,000. Production standards are high. Among the directors are several who have worked on the professional stage.

For four years the London Little Theatre has sponsored a troop

show. Plays it has produced in its Grand Theatre include: *Springtime for Henry, Dear Octopus, The Housemaster, Ten Minute Alibi, George and Margaret, Another Language, Three Live Ghosts, The Mad Hopes, Candida, Hay Fever, Ladies in Retirement, Stage Door, Claudia, Too Many Husbands* and *Watch on the Rhine.*

The Montreal Repertory Theatre, known as MRT, is one of the most famous Little Theatres in Canada. It was founded fourteen years ago by the late Martha Allan. In later years it included an active French section. At the death of Miss Allan two years ago, John Hoare, who was first active in the Canadian theatre and then in the European theatre, returned to Canada to become MRT's manager.

In 1939 MRT continued its activities and, in addition to its regular program, produced *Tin Hats,* a troop show, which was first performed in November of that year. Since then, this production has played to more than 200,000 troops in Quebec, Ontario and in the Maritime Provinces.

At the opening of this last season there was no backstage staff at MRT and a full electrical crew was urgently needed to give the equipment a thorough overhauling. Actors and actresses were also needed. So MRT flung open its doors to the public. Day after day Montreal men and women came from every branch of war work—munitions, engineering, drafting, machine tools—to offer their spare time to the theatre and they worked half the night to keep things moving. Others who had come to Montreal from other parts of Canada, from the United States, Newfoundland and Europe, also volunteered. There was a famous scene designer from Russia, another from Cambridge; a director from Geneva; an actor from Prague; an actress from England; and actors from the United States.

The season's activities were curtailed to the troop show and six major productions; the activities of the School of the Theatre and the Studio's experimental productions were suspended.

The Montreal Trinity Players changed their policy immediately at the outbreak of the war so that regimental auxiliaries would benefit from the proceeds of their productions. The plays they presented were: *You Can't Take It with You, The Passing of the Third Floor Back, Mr. and Mrs. North, What a Life* and *Ladies in Retirement.*

There is a strong difference of opinion in Montreal concerning the type of play that should be produced in wartime. The majority

of the people object to anything grim, but a minority show a strong preference for serious drama.

The Ottawa Little Theatre houses the Drama League of Canada's Capital. The players and audiences have an international flavour. The Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, and his wife, Princess Alice, continue in the tradition of Lord Bessborough's time whereby the current Governor-General is the Honorary President of the League. They attend the performances together; Princess Juliana of the Netherlands seldom misses a production; and many of the members of the diplomatic corps are subscribers.

The Little Theatre of Ottawa, having lost its actors to the services, was able to replace them with new talent that came from all over the world on 'hush-hush' missions and war jobs. Performances are given in the camps and also for the benefit of the Red Cross.

In 1942, *The Little Theatre Revue* was written and produced by members of Ottawa's Drama League. The proceeds were donated to the Air Force Benevolent Fund and Women's Auxiliary. In 1943, *Orders is Orders* was put on for an extra performance and the proceeds went to the Women's Auxiliary of the Ottawa Artillery, and *When We Were Married* was presented for the benefit of the Naval Auxiliary.

Hart House on the campus of the University of Toronto is one of the finest small theatres on the Continent. It is the gift of the Massey family of which Vincent, the High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain, and Raymond, the actor, are members. The Hart House Players are celebrated throughout the Dominion. At the outbreak of the war their director, Willard Thomson, enlisted and later lost his life at Dieppe. He has no successor. The Playwrights' Studio Group at Hart House that wrote and produced plays has suspended its operations.

Toronto, in addition to its Little Theatre activities, is a good city for professional productions. It has the only 'legitimate' playhouse in Canada open fifty-two weeks a year. This is the Royal Alexander Theatre, cosy and tasteful, with a seating capacity of 1,540. It is enjoying its most prosperous period. For five years the 'Royal Alec' has had a summer stock company starting with Frank McCoy's series of Broadway productions presenting such actors as Conrad Nagel, Ruth Chatterton and Tallulah Bankhead. During the winter, companies play for a week and sometimes for two. *Janie* ran four weeks.

Toronto's peculiar claim to distinction in the Canadian wartime theatre lies in the fact that it was the first city to join hands with a Citizens' Committee to provide entertainment for the armed forces. The direction of the project was placed in the hands of Miss Nella Jeffers. The group's record, under her capable direction, is one of 1700 performances given before a total of 1,473,270 troops with an itinerary covering 116,612 miles. The young participants gave their services voluntarily. The servicemen liked the pretty girls, sentimental songs, clever dancing and lively patter. And out of all this, the army eventually decided that it, too, would do a show—*The Army Show.*

It started in April 1943 as troop entertainment for civilians but this swiftly paced spectacle ended as troop entertainment for everybody. *The Army Show* is similar to the United States' *This Is the Army* except that it has girls—real, live, beautiful girls—all members of the Canadian Women's Army Corps. The *Show* had a triumphant seven-month tour of Canada, then was broken into five separate units and sent overseas.

Frank Shuster and Johnny Wayne, university men, wrote most of the *Show;* Ronny McCrae designed the costumes; and Arthur Price did the stage settings. Casting was a difficult job because a man in combat category could not be used no matter how good a performer he might be.

Although this type of production is but fast-moving entertainment, the Canadian Government authorized the formation of four more units to follow the same formula—variety, vaudeville, musical comedy—to play to troops in outposts too isolated to be reached by the Citizens' Committees' Concert Parties or the big *Army Show.*

The Canadian *Navy Show,* another huge, streamlined vaudeville-variety-revue similar to *The Army Show,* is making a complete tour of the Dominion, also. By April 1944 it had already entertained approximately 100,000 men and women in the three services at special free performances.

While on the West Coast the *Navy Show* made a trip to a somewhat isolated base to do a series of troop entertainments including special performances for men at a nearby United States Army base. When it played Windsor, Ontario, arrangements were made to accommodate members of the United States forces, and a special performance was presented at the United States centre in Detroit. At present, the show is making a tour of the East Coast.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has six productions in full swing;

two major units and four smaller ones. These productions have been designed for the entertainment of airmen and airwomen wherever they may be stationed—at isolated training units in prairie provinces, giant airports in distant Labrador or bombing fields in Britain.

Blackouts, one of the Air Force's larger productions, after having scored a series of successes in Canada, was sent overseas to tour the United Kingdom in charge of F. H. Coote. Section Officer Mary Carry is in charge of the airwomen, and several talented male actors were added to the cast when they were rejected as air crew for medical reasons. *All Clear,* the other major production, has been touring the Eastern Air Command of the R. C. A. F. that guards the Atlantic's sea and air approaches against enemy incursions.

Blackouts and *All Clear* are self-contained variety shows. Only R. C. A. F. members form the casts; the companies carry their own pit orchestras; and the costumes, scenery and effects are produced solely by the Air Force. In addition, the performers act as their own stage hands; they set up and dismantle the stage and pack the scenery and 'props' at each performance.

The four smaller units the Air Force has on tour are: *Swingtime,* in the Winnipeg district; *Joe Boys,* in the Vancouver district; a Concert Party, in the Montreal district; and, overseas, *Tarmacs* is touring the R. C. A. F. stations in Britain. These smaller units encourage the development of self-entertainment programs at the Air Force stations by staging 'amateur hours,' quiz programs and 'search for talent' contests.

No admission is charged for any R. C. A. F. production. They are not presented to public audiences although performances are staged for Canadian and United States naval and army personnel. In acknowledgement of the entertainment which United States organisations have provided on Canadian air stations in the past, *All Clear,* with a cast of thirty-three, went to Washington in October 1943, and played at six United States air bases in that area before launching its Canadian tour.

This then is something of the picture of Canada's theatre in wartime. The Government has made no use of the theatre for propaganda purposes and the Canadians would not have liked it if it had. Naturally, there are many other Little Theatre groups working just as earnestly and tirelessly as those that have been mentioned.

Out of the initial efforts of the Citizens' Committees, largely ones of 'trial and error,' with talented performers hastily assem-

bled; with directors whipping up Concert Parties—vaudeville—anything to give the men a good time; with rehearsals and performances conducted on stages upon which the carpenters were still working, eventually came the service shows. A survey indicates that an appreciation of the drama has been awakened all over Canada. Thousands of young Canadians are having their first taste of the theatre and are liking it. This holds a promise of greater theatrical activity throughout the Dominion after the war is over. An Atlantic to Pacific survey shows that there is also a movement afoot for the establishment of a national theatre. By national theatre is not meant, necessarily, a Memorial Building or a Civic Auditorium in some one populated centre although that may also come; but an organisation that will operate throughout the entire Dominion.

AUSTRALIA—*by* GAVIN CASEY

With the outbreak of the war there was the curtailment of Australia's transportation facilities and the creation of the strictly enforced Australian Monetary Control system, with its embargo on the export of Australian money, which was set up and administered by the Government to protect the country's wartime finances. Under these circumstances, keeping the theatre alive in Australia has not been a simple matter. But, with broad vision and neighbourly understanding, many American and English playwrights, producers, and agents, grasped the difficulties of the Australian situation and, long before Lend-Lease of war materials was put into action, personally undertook a 'lend-lease' program of the drama materials so necessary to keep the theatre alive in Australia by giving the use of their theatric properties with the understanding that they might have to wait until the end of the war to receive compensation for them.

Had this not been done, it would not have been possible for the Australians and New Zealanders—and General MacArthur's boys—to see such plays as *Claudia, Arsenic and Old Lace, The Man Who Came to Dinner, Susan and God, Watch on the Rhine, My Sister Eileen, My Dear Children, You Can't Take It With You, Let's Face It, Rebecca, Hay Fever, Gas Light* (*Angel Street*) and *Jane Eyre.*

In order to understand the Australian theatre situation, one

general circumstance must be kept in mind. Australian theatre and drama are still essentially derivative. The main sources of plays are the United States and the United Kingdom. It must also be kept in mind that before one can think of theatrical production in Australia in terms of costs of plays, artists' salaries, theatre rentals, etc., one has to face the issue of long distance transportation costs. To take an artist from New York or London to Australia and back again costs about $1,000. One ballet company that visited Australia within the last four years numbered 80 persons. The point is obvious.

J. C. Williamson, Ltd., the largest theatrical firm in Australia, has its own scenic and costume departments and New York and London successes are duplicated physically by this company as nearly as possible. Except for minute changes in the script, made to meet purely local conditions and the Australian idiom, there is a faithful adherence to the script.

This same procedure is followed by other companies in Australia. The few exceptions occur in semi-professional stock companies where, occasionally, new plays are tried out.

The Australian interest in New York and London dramatic successes is something which develops quite naturally. This does not mean that Australians are only superficially interested in the theatre. They are keenly interested in it—but England is Australia's mother country and Australians also have a deep feeling for the American way of life owing to the similarity in the history of the two countries. Psychologically, there is another reason why Australia faces toward New York and London for its theatrical fare. Geographically, Australia is far from the art centres of the world and, consequently, there is a feeling, almost a fear among the people, that they may miss something of the best, and so in the professional theatre, Australians lean toward attendance upon the productions of the great successes, rather than upon experimental productions.

The feeling for the theatre in wartime Australia has become so strong that there is a movement toward the formation of a national theatre. Prime Minister Curtin is believed to favor a system of government subsidies for established theatres in the six widely separated state capitals rather than the establishment of one giant playhouse. Some members of the theatrical profession urge the establishment of municipal theatres because of the great distances and poor transportation between the capitals. The ends of these differences of opinion are the same.

The man who virtually fathered the theatre in Australia and who was its outstanding figure for thirty-five years was an American, born in Chicago, and buried there in 1913. He was J. C. Williamson and the firm he founded has brought to Australia every New York stage success for the last sixty years. This firm has in fact combed the world for plays and stars to bring to Australia and has had a finger in every theatrical pie, from ballet to straight drama. Its history is one of amalgamations and absorptions, tough times on 'Poverty Point' and roaring successes. Today it is owned by the two old-time rivals, J. and N. Tait, and its managing director is E. J. Tait who was a Williamson man for twenty years.

Like all other theatrical concerns, the J. C. Williamson firm is today turning people away from the box office, and its post-war plans are as ambitious as any the founder's active brain planned when he travelled the world in the heyday of the legitimate theatre.

At the present writing, Williamson's famous Ivan Menzies company has completed a thirty-week season of Gilbert and Sullivan at His Majesty's Theatre in Sydney, and *Kiss and Tell* has had the same kind of run at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne. This Gilbert and Sullivan season brought the company into its fifth year of Australian comic opera and established a world record, not to mention a local one. "We are showing our productions to people who have never seen living actors on the stage before," says E. J. Tait. "The Gilbert and Sullivan audiences are young audiences, and American and Australian servicemen and women are our greatest patrons. The theatre has come to stay, and Gilbert and Sullivan music and wit are proving themselves dateless."

In April, in New Zealand, a J. C. Williamson company started staging the first professional live-artist shows seen there since 1941. The Australian Government gave the use of two seaplanes to carry the playing company over to New Zealand. The venture proved itself to be a tremendous success. In all probability what was done foreshadows the permanent establishment of a stage company in that Dominion.

There is only one professional company offering straight plays in Sydney, but its methods are unique. Its managing director, Alec Coppel, Australian-born London playwright and author of the English stage success, *I Killed the Count,* came back to Australia when the theatre was at its lowest ebb. After studying the situation for a year, he launched Whitehall Productions and has been producing ever since.

In order to keep the best actors in Australia from deserting the stage for radio because of the short theatre seasons which are inevitable in countries of small population, Mr. Coppel made his contracts with the actors for definite periods of time, not 'for the run.' In doing this he finds it fairly easy to attract the actors away from the microphone.

Mr. Coppel also did away with the traditional use of shoddy imported sets and hired or imported costumes on the theory that such materials could not compete with Hollywood motion picture glamour and now, like the Williamson firm, he has a complete production unit with its own scene designers, decorators, and costumiers.

He decided further that good shows meant more than big names on the billboards and marquees and, apart from his leading man, Edwin Styles, whole casts of his recent productions, including his present one of *Rope,* have been made up of well-drilled and thoroughly competent Australians.

Mr. Coppel feels that the Australian leaning toward American plays is so strong he recently made it part of his production policy to produce two of them to every one from London.

So far, Mr. Coppel's ideas have worked out well. His theatre with its playing company, not in the city of Sydney proper but in its populous suburb, King's Cross, is playing to capacity houses. Wednesday matinees are open to patients in military hospitals without charge, and on Sunday nights the whole cast goes to the 113th Australian General Hospital to perform for the wounded men.

"All our audiences have plenty of khaki in them," says Mr. Coppel. "The ones which are wholly khaki are the best and the most receptive audiences we have ever had. The men who have been on the battle fronts seem to have had their perceptions quickened by war and action. At least, they seem to grasp all the subtleties of the theatre more quickly and appreciatively than members of the ordinary public."

Mr. Coppel's opinion that war has improved the perceptive powers of the participants is borne out by his star, the former Broadway and Hollywood actor Edwin Styles, who has returned from an entertainment tour of forward areas in New Guinea. Both men also believe that as a result of war activities a new generation of theatregoers is developing in Australia and that the present popularity of the theatre here will outlast the war.

The theatre in Australia has received the most hearty support

from innumerable groups of amateurs in the main cities, but the war has hurt the Little Theatre because the man-power restrictions which protect professional morale-maintaining amusements do not apply to amateur performances. However, good work is being done by Bret Randall's Little Theatre in Melbourne; Terence Crisp's Melbourne University Players; repertory theatres in Adelaide and Perth; Edward Beeby's Patch Theatre in Perth; and many others.

In Sydney, fourteen years of struggle have brought Doris Fitton's Independent Theatre to the point of owning its own theatre and paying casts to operate on a semi-professional basis. Americans form a large part of all Independent Theatre crowds and Miss Fitton is enthusiastic about them. "The ones who have sought us out are real theatregoers," she declares. "They are critical and keen. Americans in our audiences have often seen the plays previously in the United States, and their comments are interesting and helpful."

Troop entertainment in Australia is organised on a big scale by the Army Amenities Branch, and professional companies, players, and vaudevillians spare no time or effort to co-operate. Australian authorities have not yet permitted ballets or girl shows in New Guinea, but ballets have visited this turbulent island to entertain American troops—and Australians have gone along to see the show.

What troops in forward and isolated areas like to see are girl shows, reports the management of Tivoli, Australia's inter-capital vaudeville organisation. "What Tivoli gives them is girl shows both in operational areas and when they are on leave in the cities," says Sydney's Tivoli Circuit Director, Cliff Maver. Elaborate shows are sent by train, road, and plane to camps in the remotest parts of the big, sparsely settled continent.

American-born Mike Connors who came to Australia for six months twenty-seven years ago and has been here ever since agrees with this policy and emphasizes that sophisticated acts do not interest the fighting men as do the simpler, homely numbers. Now in radio with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Mr. Connors gets great fun out of taking the 'Out of the Bag' hour in person to military hospitals and camps. His wife, Queenie Paul, trains and costumes ballet girls for troop entertainment.

"It's worth a week's work to see boys in plaster casts and wheelchairs forget their hospital surroundings when the show gets them,"

A LETTER FROM INDIA

by

ARTHUR L. WOEHL

August 11, 1944

Dear Dick:

This is a late, but none the less appreciative acknowledgment of your letter of February 1, and of the copy of the *Theatre Annual* which reached me near the end of April. When your letter came I was hoping to go on leave, and thinking that I might have some chance to see something of the Indian Theatre, I postponed answering. I didn't get the leave until the first of June—and then discovered that I might just as well have written you earlier, because I found nothing of the theatre in the places I visited.

In the small town near which I am stationed there is one cinema, but no theatre. That isn't anything to excite comment, for a town of similar size back home would have no theatre either. I was surprised, however, to find that Bombay and Calcutta were similarly lacking in legitimate theatres—but not in cinema theatres, which display an amazing variety of domestic and foreign films to an avid public.

I was the guest in Bombay of a well-known Indian motion picture actor, Shahn Modak. Perhaps it was for that reason that I was so impressed with the idea that the cinema has taken over all the functions of the legitimate theatre, as well as its own. I studied the newspapers carefully for signs of just one theatre presenting plays, but could find none. When I asked Shahn Modak about it, he told me there was no theatre in Bombay where plays could be seen. He had participated in a drama festival during May when a series of plays was given representing types of plays from the earliest known down to the present. The plays were well attended by thousands, many of whom had never seen a play before. The actors were recruited from the motion picture studios—in itself a significant commentary on the dearth of actors of legitimate drama trained in the Marathi dialect.

Shahn Modak and fellow-actors whom I met at his home, were all enthusiastic when speaking of the future of the Indian motion picture industry. They are well informed on technical and aesthetic details, especially of American films produced in Hollywood. Several

of them, including Shahn Modak, plan to visit Hollywood after the war to learn what they can for the benefit of the Indian cinema.

Most of the Indian films are made in and around Bombay. There are more than twenty studios there, several more in Poona, one or two in Madras, and several in Calcutta. Each studio at present is limited to the production of three films a year, one of which must be a propaganda film. The others are either social dramas or stories taken from the legends of the many saints of the Hindus. The acting in several of the pictures I have seen was good. The films seem long and episodic, though possibly an understanding of the language would make clearer the many short scenes and explain the many seemingly abrupt transitions. Dialogue is in Hindustan as a usual thing, with a second sound track for the locality in which the film is made—Marathi for Bombay and vicinity, Bengali for Calcutta, and so on. Humor is abundant, even in the legendary films with a religious background.

The great number of Indian films made and exhibited does not seem to reduce the public's enjoyment of American films. Early Chaplin and Fairbanks films are advertised alongside of the latest Hollywood releases. They are so well attended that cinema-goers talk together of their favorite American actors as much as they do of their preferences among the Indian actors.

Films for educational purposes are being used extensively in several parts of the country. In Bombay, there is a proposal to purchase a traveling cinema van for carrying on health propaganda. In Simla, the Central Bureau of Education intends to start a film library. The British Council of Films has already agreed to send it films free of cost, and it is planned to get educational films also from America and Russia. The library will be open to all educational institutions in India.

This rapid and brief summary is all I can manage at present—and in any case, is no answer to your request for information on the wartime "theatre" in India. But I thought you would like to hear about the Indian cinema anyway.

Sincerely yours,

ARTHUR L. WOEHL

says Mr. Connors. All the men and women who give their time to acting for the troops agree.

The Tivoli Circuit organisation finds that servicemen and civilians alike are particularly responsive to war songs, gags pointed at the top sergeant, and all sorts of fun with a service background.

With Will Mahoney as ace comedian, flying acts, shows, and ballets, this Circuit is filling its theatres in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, and is travelling thousands of miles to entertain the troops. Tivoli's eight-girl ballets have been railed, motored, and flown to outposts such as Darwin, Rockhampton, Cairns, and Townsville to make life a bit brighter for bored soldiers, and many individual artists have put on shows right behind the New Guinea firing lines.

THE PULITZER PRIZE

by

WALTER PRICHARD EATON

In what seems to me now the remote past I was, I think on eleven occasions, a member of the jury asked to recommend the play best deserving the Pulitzer Award, and on all but one of these occasions the prize was awarded according to the recommendations by the powers which administer the Pulitzer Endowment. The jury was overruled in 1934, and the prize was given to *Men in White* instead of to the recommended *Mary of Scotland.* No member of that jury ever consented to serve again. It may be because of this past connection of mine with the Pulitzer Prize awards in drama, that I have been asked to write about them. I can think of no other reason. My connection with them has never been official, only advisory, and I am certainly moved neither to defend nor to attack them, or any other prize awards for that matter, in any of the arts. Mr. John Anderson, writing in a previous issue of this publication[1] about the Critics' Circle prize, definitely gave the impression that the drama critics of New York began to hand out their guerdon in protest against the inept Pulitzer choices. The critics would correct the sad errors of judgment displayed by the Pulitzer juries. But though I was eleven times a juror, I feel no itch to cross swords with the critics. I merely feel a bit sorry for them. They have done, on the whole, little better than the Pulitzer juries, and, indeed, finally did rather worse in 1943 and, not so long ago, seemed in danger of giving up the job altogether. At least, they have learned something of its difficulties, something of its thanklessness, and possibly something of its futility.

According to the terms of Mr. Pulitzer's will, the prize was to be awarded to "the original American play performed in New York which shall best represent the educational value and power of the stage in raising the standard of good morals, good taste, and good manners." This proviso was generally, and ignorantly, regarded as a restriction imposed by Victorianism. Mr. Anderson poohpoohed it, and the administrators of the will modified it some time

[1] John Anderson, "The Circle," *Theatre Annual, 1942,* p. 17.

ago. Actually, of course, it was drawn from the canons of classic criticism (though, perhaps, we should hardly expect the New York drama critics to know that), and in other terms said only that the best drama must have a moralistic base, as had the drama of Sophocles and Shakespeare. The conditions said that Molière should have a prize, but not, perhaps, Congreve. At any rate, they represented Mr. Pulitzer's belief, and, as the donor of the award, it always seemed to me, and still seems, that he is entitled to some consideration. Nor do I think for a moment that our best dramatists, O'Neill, Anderson, Behrman, Sherwood, let us say, would for a moment hesitate to agree with Mr. Pulitzer.

But let that pass. Rather let us consider the Pulitzer awards mentioned by Mr. Anderson as particularly inept and hence influential in driving the Critics' Circle to corrective awards of its own.

His quarrel begins with the 1923-1924 award to *Hell-bent fer Heaven,* in a year that saw *The Show-Off.* I was not on the jury that year, but it is, as Mr. Anderson said, a fact that the jury's recommendation was ignored. There was, I have been told, an unfortunate mix-up. Professor Phelps who was on the Pulitzer play jury that year had not seen *Hell-bent fer Heaven* but took the judgment of his two colleagues about it. This annoyed Professor Brander Matthews at Columbia who made a case of it, and won out. But, whatever the inside facts, the result was an award to a play obviously less deserving, from any standard, than Mr. Kelly's. The next year (1924-1925) I was on the jury, and I now freely admit that our recommendation of *They Knew What They Wanted,* when we might (and should) have recommended *What Price Glory?,* was a boner. (I do not admit that either *The Firebrand* or even *Desire Under the Elms* was more entitled to the prize.) I may add that the play jury gave long consideration to its recommendation that year, and finally saw the Howard play as a more lasting contribution than *What Price Glory?,* which we decided was topical. As a matter of fact, *What Price Glory?* has never been revived. On the other hand, *They Knew What They Wanted,* when recently revived, was badly dated.

The next year (1925-1926), we gave the award to Mr. Kelly's *Craig's Wife* which Mr. Anderson called a "lesser work" of the author and compared unfavorably with *The Butter and Egg Man, The Wisdom Tooth* and *The Great God Brown.* But it seems to me that no apologies are called for. Kelly's *The Show-Off* is as dated now as the slang it is written in, but *Craig's Wife* is still in

the active repertoire of our theatre—meaning by our theatre, the hundreds of acting groups all over the country. *The Butter and Egg Man* was a trivial farce-comedy with nothing behind it; *The Wisdom Tooth,* though a play with much charm, never quite came across in the theatre; *The Great God Brown* was an interesting experiment, but bewildering and fumbling, and has seldom been revived. *Craig's Wife* was, actually, a rather clever award, as time has proved.

The following year (1926-1927), again according to Mr. Anderson, such celebrated plays as *Saturday's Children, Broadway, Chicago, The Road to Rome* and *The Silver Cord* were blandly ignored and the Pulitzer Award given to Paul Green's *In Abraham's Bosom.* It is obvious that neither *Saturday's Children* nor *Chicago* could ever have been recommended by a jury with any sense of responsibility. *Broadway,* of course, was a stunning melodrama reflecting the bootleg era, but it was doomed to pass with the era, and at bottom it was clever stage manipulation and little more. *The Road to Rome* was diluted Shaw; Sherwood was still feeling his way. Our choice lay between *The Silver Cord* and the new play by young Green, his first play to reach New York, though it only reached the Provincetown Playhouse. Because this play came up out of the soil of the South, and with a passionate sincerity tried to say something important about the Negro problem, and because it seemed to us that the prize, if given to Green, might be a great encouragement to regional American drama, we recommended *In Abraham's Bosom.* We knew we would be criticised, but I still think we did right. As between the future career of Abbott as a playwright and that of Paul Green, our choice seems to make sense. And who has ever heard again of the author of *Chicago?*

In 1930-1931 we recommended *Alison's House* by Susan Glaspell for the award and by so doing brought down on our heads immediate scorn, and much later, the scorn of Mr. Anderson. But its only real competitors among native plays were *Elizabeth the Queen* and Barry's *Tomorrow and Tomorrow,* the latter not a serious competitor. The choice, really, was between a play acted with great acclaim by Lunt and Fontanne in the older fashion of romantic verse drama, and a play acted down on Fourteenth Street by Miss Le Gallienne's struggling Civic Repertory Company which plumbed the deep American love of home and family still existing

outside the confines of New York cubbyhole apartments, and which also brought the strange story of Emily Dickinson to dramatic life. Again I have no apologies for this choice. *Alison's House* somewhat bored the critics in New York (it always bored them to have to go down to Fourteenth Street, anyhow), but it was acted for a long time by many theatre groups throughout the country, and in a production I saw only three years ago, it was still a moving and provocative play which deserved a recognition Broadway refused.

The award to *The Old Maid* (1934-1935) came after I had resigned from the jury. It, of course, was not an original play because it added no values not found in Mrs. Wharton's novel. On the other hand, we had earlier given the award to *The Green Pastures* which was based on Roark Bradford's stories, and were not criticised. Before doing so, we consulted Mr. Pulitzer's son who said, "Does it add something original, making the work a new and perhaps larger thing, as Shakespeare added to the stories he took?" We said we thought it did. "Then give it the prize," said he. Mr. Anderson said nothing about the award for 1931-1932, when we had to choose, the Lord help us, from *Mourning Becomes Electra, Reunion in Vienna, The House of Connelly* and a musical comedy, *Of Thee I Sing*. We gave the award to the musical comedy, expecting another critical blast upon our heads. But the critics were either stunned or pleased, I can't say which—perhaps a little of both. At any rate, I like to feel that the award to that musical comedy had something to do with the subsequent increase of intelligence in the better librettos. I like to fancy, even, that it helped a tiny bit in making *Oklahoma!* possible.

In 1935-1936, the Circle's first award went to *Winterset*. The Pulitzer Prize that year was given to *Idiot's Delight*. Most of us greatly enjoyed both plays, and could not feel that any great injustice would be done whichever way the honors went. Personally, I incline to *Winterset* but I should think it foolish to assert that the contrary opinion argues stultifying esthetic ignorance.

In 1936-1937, the Pulitzer Prize went to *You Can't Take It With You,* and the Circle prize to *High Tor*. I agree with the critics there. The next year (1937-1938), the critics honored *Of Mice and Men,* and the Pulitzer jury *Our Town*. There I think the majority of people would stand by the Pulitzer choice, and in years to come will still be familiar with the Wilder play when they have forgotten the other. The next year (1938-1939), the critics could

not make up their minds between *The Little Foxes* and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. The Pulitzer Prize went to the latter play, indicating no vast departure from the critics' standards. In 1939-1940, both prizes went to *The Time of Your Life,* showing that both factions were not immune to fads. And the authors of *Life With Father* chuckled. The following season (1940-1941) the critics honored *Watch on the Rhine,* and the Pulitzer jury *There Shall Be No Night* —and I'm as glad as you are not to have to make up my mind between the two.

The next year (1941-1942), the Circle made no award. The critics couldn't agree that any play deserved a prize—and neither could the Pulitzer jury. In 1942-1943, the Circle, whose members individually had danced on the sidewalk, shouted hosannas from the housetops, and otherwise had critical conniptions over *The Skin of Our Teeth,* did an about-face on the rumor that Wilder had borrowed from *Finnegan's Wake* (which nobody could prove to the contrary because nobody could read *Finnegan's Wake*), and gave its prize to *The Patriots,* a play everybody, the critics included, expected the Pulitzer jury to honor. But, the Pulitzer jury, equally unable to read *Finnegan's Wake,* evidently decided that *The Skin of Our Teeth* was highly original no matter where it came from, and handed Mr. Wilder the prize just as he was embarking for overseas in a captain's uniform.

In 1944, the Critics' Circle, which began by throwing stones at the Pulitzer awards, must certainly have heard the tinkle of breaking glass which usually follows such activity. The Circle could not make up its collective mind which was the best play of the year, and hence could make no award. Seven critics voted for Miss Hellman's *The Searching Wind,* but eight were needed for a majority. At least the members of the Pulitzer Committee have always made up their minds. In 1944, they made up their minds that no play was quite good enough for the award (which, perhaps, was what the critics' vote amounted to), but they did give a special prize to Oscar Hammerstein II. and Richard Rodgers for *Oklahoma!* Naturally this had to be a special prize, for *Oklahoma!* is not an original work, but is based on a play by Lynn Riggs (who has, perhaps, received too little credit for the success of this operetta), and Rodgers is a composer, not a dramatist. However, there can be no question but that *Oklahoma!* is an operetta of charm and distinction, and that it is admirably composed of native ma-

terial. The Pulitzer Committee made a happy gesture in giving it recognition. At the very least the Committee did something positive to encourage fine work in the American theatre, which is more than the critics did by their failure to reach any conclusion at all; to make any gesture at all except a shaking of the heads like the dwarfs in *Rip Van Winkle*.

And what does all this prove? *De gustibus non est disputandum*, perhaps. That it is difficult to tell until Time has come to one's aid, what is enduring art and what is a flash in the pan. That there is a fear, sometimes, on the part of the administrators of a trust (and even the Pulitzer jurors are, in a sense, such administrators) of departing too violently from conservatism in making their judgments. That, possibly, there is a somewhat greater sense of the underlying moral responsibility of art on the part of such men as constitute the Pulitzer juries than on the part of Broadway critics. And, of course, that, now and then, there is just plain esthetic dumbnesss, as when we preferred *They Knew What They Wanted* to *What Price Glory?* But, on the whole and in recent years, matched award for award with the Critics' Circle's choices, the Pulitzer Prize has not been unworthily administered. When one considers that the French Academy did not admit Molière till he had been dead a century, one might even say that the Pulitzer Prize has been awarded with some distinction.

My own feeling is, after serving on many Pulitzer juries and taking many critical jibes on the chin, that it would have been wiser and more useful if the award had been made each year not to the author of the so-called *best* play, but to the new author who had shown what seemed the greatest promise of potential development in technical skill and serious purpose. We tried, perhaps unwisely, to do just that when we gave the prize to Paul Green for *In Abraham's Bosom*—unwisely because the terms of the award make no provision for such considerations. But, as matters now stand, the prize is almost sure to go to a dramatist who has already won his spurs and fought his way to an assured position in the theatre. Few, if any, men write a *best* play on the first or second try; but many a man has been unable, for want of encouragement and some financial aid, to keep on making the tries. If the critics who must perforce see everything could be consulted by the Pulitzer jury, or could tip off the jury when some play comes along worth a look, yet not destined for any length of run, and if the members

of the play jury had as their duty not the ex-cathedra judgment of a *best* play but the encouragement of a worthy beginner, I feel that the award would then accomplish more for the American theatre. But it is too late to do anything about that now.

SURFACE AND UNDER IMAGERY IN ACTING

by

SAMUEL SELDEN

The business of the actor, it has been said, is to create imagery. This imagery is the visible and audible counterpart of the original pictures in the playwright's mind, pictures which are written down and then translated by the actor into breathing and pulsing action. What the player produces is quite tangible, a dramatic character made of flesh, voice, and movement. Yet his creation is not reality. It is the *semblance* only. In preparing his part the actor makes up his face. He puts on a costume. He assumes a posture, a manner of walking, a style of speaking—none of which are his own. Then he steps into a setting which *looks like* a real place—the sitting-room of the Mayo farmhouse, or the side of a New Hampshire roadway at sunrise,—but which in truth is a group of wooden and canvas screens lighted by electric lamps. The aim of the actor is not to be, but to suggest. Throughout his appearance on the stage he strives to stimulate the spectator's imagination in such a way as to make him see, hear, and feel much more than the actual stage objects. What the actor creates, therefore, is not reality but imagery—a picturization of forms in motion designed to stir imagination. The images made by the player have their physical presence on the stage. They walk and talk in the body of the actor. But their features and their movements, in so far as they *seem* to be the living expression of dramatic personalities, depend for their meaningful existence on the mind of the audience. Stage imagery therefore is always the result of a collaboration. The actor creates, and the spectator sees—what the actor wants him to see.

Some of the figures the actor creates are fairly concrete. Some can be intimated only; and these are often dramatically the most important. For this reason, the player has to distinguish carefully between image and image. On the surface clearly is one kind of image which the spectator can see and hear. This is the part of the general stage imagery which may be photographed and recorded on sound disks. In this phase of the dramatic action, the characters reveal all the restraints imposed upon them by natural

obstacles such as costumes, furniture, walls, doors, chairs, or iron bars; but particularly by the learned controls which spring from social breeding. Beneath the surface image is a second one, which, though never revealed openly, is implied. This is the picturization of what the characters are actually feeling, or feeling like doing. In the under image all constraint is removed, and the characters behave broadly and completely. They stride freely toward or away from the presences that confront them, leap or lie down, caress or destroy—in accordance with their inmost urges.

Generally speaking, the under images represent the primitive—the uninhibited, intuitive, naturally dynamic side of a dramatic character; while the surface images reflect his socially conscious—and consequently more contemplative, more controlled—side. Since every man who wears a shirt, sleeps in a bed, and says "good morning" politely to his neighbors is, at the same time, a savage and a civilized being, the two images of his dynamic personality take form together. The man is hungry. If he were simply a savage and saw meat on the table, he would grasp it in his hands, place it to his mouth, and eat it straightway. His action would be direct, uninhibited. However, because he has been trained to regard the feelings of other people, he controls his violent impulses. Instead of grasping the meat and gulping it down, he sits quietly beside it, spreads a napkin on his knees and proceeds to pick at his food with silver tools. While he eats, he talks to his companions at the table, graciously, unhurriedly. But his appetite is still primitive. No amount of white linen, gleaming cutlery, or conversation about the coming elections can alter his feeling. Therefore, a dramatization of the fact of hunger in a scene like this would have to give some hint of the inner urge. It could be presented in a number of different ways: the way the man approaches the table; the way he smacks his lips; the way he cuts his meat; the way he tastes it; or in the tone of his voice when he comments on it. Words alone, however, would not tell the truth of his present satisfaction, for he might only be complimenting his hostess. Tone would give the conviction—tone which echoed, even though distantly, the sound of the wildman growling over his food.

Perhaps the man has cause to be angry at another man. If he were purely a savage he would seize the nearest rock and beat out his enemy's brains with it. Since his social upbringing, however, has taught him that direct action in rage tends to defeat itself in the end, he will curb his primitive impulse. Instead of striking

his foe, he may smile at him—a bit tight-lipped, probably,—and offer him a cigarette. He may even talk about the weather. But beneath that suave exterior still crouches the tense-muscled form of the savage; and if the situation is to be visualized on the stage, the audience will have to see glimpses of that hidden form. Little involuntary movements — apparently impulsive but actually rehearsed—might be the things that will reveal him; a sharp intake of breath, an interrupted gesture, a quick flexing and slow unflexing of the fingers, a stiff posturing of the neck and shoulders. Often the clearest indication of the wildman under the skin of the gentleman is an exaggerated display of control. If the person exercising restraint moves and speaks with an unusual calm, his behavior becomes immediately suspicious. The spectator senses the strain of control and, consequently, watches with considerable excitement to see if the savage will tear loose from his bonds.

Perhaps the man loves a woman. As a savage, his actions would be swift and simple. He would take hold of her, carry her to his lair, and make her his. As a person of more civilized tastes, however, he tempers his biological hungers with thoughtfulness. He does this so that in the end he may enjoy all sides of her personality more fully. So he courts her. He takes her riding. He dances with her. He plays tennis with her. He compliments her on her clothes, reads to her, writes to her, brings her gifts. If the man really loves the woman, he may spend ten years trying to win her. But none of this devious behavior ever for a moment destroys the basic fact of sex—that it is the most primitive urge of life which gives power and richness to all the rest. Without it, the whole relationship between the man and the woman would become a graceful but meaningless display.

Romeo and Juliet has generally been called the greatest of all love stories. Everyone admits the fundamental element of passion in it. Yet, very often, those who act the play do it poorly. As actors, they are so enamored of the "beauty of Shakespeare's verse," that they fail to sense the fire which gives the lines their warmth. The result is loveliness without substance. The players become so obsessed with the surface imagery that they give no real attention to the under images. This is a trap into which young players, particularly, are apt to fall.

From a study of such actions as those described, it should not be assumed that the emotional under images of any given scene are constituted by little actions. This is not true. Under images

are usually expressed in large actions. The little actions which the spectator actually sees are the *clues* to the hidden images, but they are not the images themselves. The under images exist only through the eye of the spectator's mind. They are, in effect, the things that he senses the character would be seen doing if he were freed from certain restraints. The spectator sees the man eating quietly at the table. He notes his gentlemanly behavior with the knife, fork, and napkin; but he also observes (through his mind's eye) the savage tearing at his food. That under image represents the real hunger of the man. The spectator sees two urbane persons sitting and speaking quietly to each other; but he also senses them on their feet, striking and snarling at each other. That imagined picture is the true expression of their feelings. The spectator hears two young people teasing each other lightly with words; but he also sees them locked in each other's arms. By the measure of his ability to sense the embrace will he be able to feel the depth of the lovers' attachment.

In every dramatic scene the under images are to be apprehended most keenly in moments of stress. Then it is that the lines of the hidden forms project themselves more powerfully than at any other time. But effective playing does not limit the ground in which these images operate. Since the under images provide the elemental, emotional driving force for all the surface imagery, their existence can never pale into oblivion without danger to the scene as a whole. At all times, even during the most intellectual, and therefore abstract, passages there should be sensed vaguely, at least, the struggling of persons to search out other persons, to approach or to avoid things, to sink or to rise higher, and to extend or curtail other people's action.

Closely connected with under imagery is still a third kind of image. It employs the factor of time and might be called the master image.

The master image is a picturization—in the mind of the audience—of the basic development of a dramatic scene. Evolving slowly in the plane of under imagery, it represents the bigger contours of the scene as if they were great fundamental actions. Through the whole course of an episode, for example, a central character might be felt to be improving his sensuous grasp of a presence which intrigues him, or he might seem to be drawn gradually but powerfully toward a person whom he is trying to avoid. Or he might be felt to be reaching upward step by step; or to be

sinking downward step by step; or to be building something; or to be tearing it apart, slowly and methodically.

The master image, extending as it may through the whole course of a dramatic conflict, depicts the changing line of relationship between two struggling contestants. First, the spectator seems to see one of the characters gaining, rising higher and higher until he is ready from his superior height to strike down the quivering form of his opponent. Then, through some trick in a moment of crisis, the positions of the two men may be reversed; the man who was above seems now to have fallen, while the enemy who was prostrate seems now to be erect.

When the master image is skillfully constructed, it picturizes for the spectator the movement not only of physical forces, but also of spiritual forces. By means of human symbols, it sets over against each other concepts of order and chaos, justice and brutality, love and vengeance, or greed and hospitality; and then it shows these concepts approaching or avoiding each other, sinking beneath or rising above each other, and building or destroying each other.

Master images, like the lesser under images, are purely imaginary. But their existence must be indicated by some visible and audible means. These will be the same pantomimic and vocal clues which are used to reveal the other hidden actions; but they will be so ordered as to suggest the larger aspects of change and growth.

ACT AND SCENE DIVISION IN THE FIRST EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE

by

NORMAN PHILBRICK

In 1709, when Nicholas Rowe, the popular writer of "she-tragedies," brought out his edition of Shakespeare's plays, the textual tradition was launched. Those who later applied higher criticism to the text of the plays strengthened the tradition and prepared the way for a not always quiet war between the purveyors of the text and the producers of the plays.

The traditionalists who shudder at any tampering done to Shakespeare, and who are grounded in the text, frequently fail to see that the problem of production is often at variance with the cold words handed down through three and a quarter centuries of textual revision and emendation. After all, the plays were originally written for the theatre and not for the study, and the tendency to turn Shakespeare into "closet drama" has never been successful. The average American who has been forced to read Shakespeare in the schoolroom has been left with the unfortunate impression that the Elizabethans were very dull indeed. He was then amazed to find, on seeing Mrs. Fiske and Otis Skinner in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* or, more recently, Maurice Evans in *Richard II.*, or Paul Robeson in *Othello,* that here is almost intoxicating vitality and fire, here is drama that could never be stuffy because of its very essence.

The problem is where to begin? If the scholar keeps to his study and the producer keeps to his stage, and each of them sits in the scorner's seat, there is little room for compromise. In the long history of professional Shakespearean productions there has never been a time when some changes in the text during production have not been made. This is the very nature of the theatre, and changes are not always the result of a producer's thinking he can improve on the author.

The problem of act and scene division in Shakespeare is a case in point. One may religiously follow the text, bring the curtain down four times during the action to indicate the separation of the play into five acts. The scene division may be indicated as set up in the text by the drawing together of curtains. A small scene may be played in front of the curtains while the stage is set behind for

the next action. This is one procedure out of many. Or the producer may feel, as Margaret Webster does, that Shakespeare's "time rhythm is badly jarred by our scene waits, which in his theatre did not exist, . . . [that] we should clear our minds of anything which obstructs the unbroken flow of Shakespeare's writing, and that in staging we should eliminate as far as possible the breaks and checks which scene changes impose upon it."[1] Thus it can be seen that a conscientious producer, professional or non-professional, may choose a middle path, modifying the text but not completely reforming it.

And yet it may be very true that originally there were no act divisions and no scene waits in Shakespeare's plays. Such an assumption has given rise to the so-called "continuity theory." Publication of Elizabethan dramas in Quarto form became more and more popular from 1591 onwards. An interesting list published by W. W. Greg in *The Review of English Studies* results in the following statistics: of the plays published between 1591 and 1610, Mr. Greg finds that seventy-one are divided into acts, ninety-two are undivided. Out of the seventy-one, only twenty are neither court plays nor plays written for the children's companies to be acted in private theatres. This last point is significant, because we know that it was customary to have act intervals of music and singing in the private theatres and also in the children's companies, whereas in the public playhouses there was no such practice.[2]

How exactly do these circumstances apply to Shakespeare? Of the plays published during Shakespeare's active life in London until 1611, the vast majority performed in the public theatres were not divided into acts and scenes. Only one of the Quartos published in Shakespeare's lifetime has any indication of act and scene division. This was the first edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, published in 1597, and there are no act or scene divisions in it until the end of the present Act III., Scene iv. "After this each new scene is marked off from its predecessor by a printer's ornament."[3]

It can be argued that the publishers did not bother with act and scene indications when they printed a play but that such divisions actually existed in the productions of the plays. Such an argument is invalidated by the very obvious fact that there were a considerable number of plays printed with act and scene divisions apparent, some

[1] *Shakespeare without Tears* (New York, 1942), pp. 57-58.

[2] W. W. Greg, "Act Divisions in Shakespeare," *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. IV (1928).

[3] Alfred W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* (London, 1909), pp. 1-65.

of them being plays produced in public theatres. For the most part, however, the act and scene divisions occurred in the literary and court plays of the time.

From this evidence it may be safe to assume that the usual Elizabethan practice was to ignore act and scene division in the actual production of the plays with some possible exceptions. E. K. Chambers sums it up in this manner:

> Acts and scenes, which are an outward form of a method of construction derived from the academic analysis of Latin comedy and tragedy, make their appearance, with other notes of neo-classical influence, in the farces of Udall, in the Court tragedies, in translated plays, in Lyly's comedies. . . . Ben Jonson and a few other later writers adopt them in printing plays of theatrical origin. But the great majority of plays belonging to the public theatres continue to be printed without any divisions at all, while the plays from the private houses are ordinarily divided into acts but not into scenes.[1]

J. Dover Wilson applies the situation even more directly to Shakespeare when he says:

> Act divisions, which are of course classical in origin, are found in many sixteenth century dramatic texts, while some of the extant "plots," most of which belonged to the Admiral's men, prove that act-pauses were a recognized feature at certain theatres in Shakespeare's day. . . . None of the Quartos published during Shakespeare's lifetime (that is, of his own plays) contains the conventional divisions which now appear in all modern texts. It would seem, therefore, that he did not work in acts and scenes; and the probability that most if not all these Quartos were printed from prompt-copies suggests that as long as he was at the Globe his plays were performed without breaks.[2]

The modern producer is therefore already exonerated for not following textual tradition if he adheres to the "continuity theory" and lets his audience sit through the whole performance without a break in the action. Yet the custom of act and scene breaks is established, and, though he does not rigidly follow the text, the producer must find some place to make the intermission, even if only

[1] *The Elizabethan Stage* (*London*, 1923), Vol. III, p. 199.

[2] William Shakespeare, Textual Introduction, *The Tempest*, ed. J. Dover Wilson (New York, 1921), p. xxxvi.

once. He may arbitrarily make one break in all the action; he may make two. He may find it necessary to make a scene division as the place changes or a new character or set of characters comes on the stage. If, however, he goes to the text, he will find the plays neatly divided. Each play will have five acts, and each act will have a number of scenes definitely indicated. The question then is this: if Shakespeare's original plays had no act and scene division, as is rather clearly established from the evidence, how do all modern texts have divisions and on whose authority are they presented? The answer is Nicholas Rowe.

Nicholas Rowe can truly be called the first editor of Shakespeare. A prominent dramatist and writer of tragedy in Queen Anne's reign, he brought out the first edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1709. His editing was not thorough, nor was he always right. In some ways his was nothing more than an elaborate proofreading. Many of Rowe's emendations have continued down to the present day, but in addition to these he made some technical clarifications which have outlived some of his textual changes. D. Nichol Smith sums them up in this manner: ". . . treating Shakespeare's plays much as he would have treated his own, he furnished lists of the *dramatis personae,* frequently stated where the scene was laid, and added stage directions."[1] A fourth technical device with which Rowe was concerned in his "editing" of the Shakespearean dramas was the division into acts and scenes.

As far as act division is concerned, Rowe's problem was comparatively simple. As a dramatist he knew the five-act tradition of the time. There was no other form used, with the possible exception to be noted in some late sixteenth-century plays which were divided into four acts. But five was the accepted number of acts in all plays. The rule had descended from Seneca and Horace. The Horatian dictum as restated by Dryden in the Seventeenth Century, which in translation reads: "Let the acts be no more nor less than five," was religiously followed.[2]

Scene division created an entirely different kind of problem. As has been pointed out, there were no scene breaks in the Quartos of Shakespeare's plays printed during the author's lifetime. But there were scene breaks in the Folios. By 1709, when Rowe produced his edition of Shakespeare, the first real edition, there had been four of the Folios published.

[1] *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1926), p. 31.

[2] *The Great Critics,* ed. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (New York, 1932), p. 120.

The Seventeenth Century was the century of the Folios. Four of these collections of Shakespeare's plays were published between 1623 and 1685. Each new edition was based on the preceding one, and the changes in the separate Folios were not great. It is a point of fine distinction whether the proofreaders of the various Folios could be called editors or not. Perhaps they were only compilers. The changes they made are for the most part in the nature of typographical corrections, and even then new errors were likely to be made over the previous printing of the plays.

The First Folio was published in 1623. It was printed by Isaac Jaggard and Ed. Blount. The plays were collected by John Heminge and Henry Condell, who were fellow actors of Shakespeare.[1] The copy for the plays came from the Globe Theatre where Shakespeare's company performed. The material printed was that which had been used for the performances. There were prompt books, both printed and in manuscript, obviously saved when the Globe burned in 1613. Besides these, Heminge and Condell may have used assembled texts from the players' parts, or "sides," and the prompter's plot which was made up of the names of the players posted scene by scene in order of entry.[2] However the material was collected, aside from the use of Quartos already in existence, twenty plays never before printed were added to the First Folio. It was the first appearance in print of *The Tempest, Two Gentlemen of Verona, Measure for Measure, The Comedy of Errors, As You Like It, All's Well that Ends Well, Twelfth Night, The Winter's Tale, Henry VI. Part I., Henry VI. Part II., Henry VI. Part III., Henry VIII., Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline, King John,* and *The Taming of the Shrew.*[3]

In 1623, the Second Folio was printed by Thomas Cotes for Robert Allot, the stationer, and others. In it there are syntactical and metrical changes, new stage directions, and corrections in *Richard II.* and *Henry V., Troilus and Cressida, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.* The Third Folio appeared in 1663, a reprint of the Second Folio with some changes in the text. In 1664, a second issue of the Third Folio was printed. It was this issue which contained seven new plays, all of them now considered spurious with the possible exception of

[1] Henrietta C. Bartlett, *Mr. William Shakespeare* (New Haven, 1922), p. 50.
[2] J. Dover Wilson in *Studies in the First Folio* (London, 1924), p. 63.
[3] H. C. Bartlett, *op. cit.* p. 50.

Pericles. The Fourth Folio was printed in 1685, a reprint of the Third Folio with a few important corrections.[1]

It is the last Folio which a great number of authorities have stated that Rowe followed in his editing of Shakespeare. They seem to assume from a cursory investigation that Rowe used the Fourth Folio because it was nearest to him. Alfred Pollard concurs with the general opinion that Rowe followed the Fourth Folio and did not compare his text with the First Folio or the Quartos. Sidney Lee makes a similar observation although he adds that Rowe may have seen an early Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* which he used when editing that play.[2] D. Nichol Smith, however, is more astute. He agrees that Rowe based his text on the Fourth Folio, but he adds:

> None the less, Rowe was the first to turn back to the original editions. In the play of *Henry V.* there are more than twenty passages where he has restored the reading of the First or Second Folio; and there are other passages in this play where he gives the reading, not of a Folio, but of a Quarto. In *King Lear* his use of one of the Quartos is unquestionable. We cannot say with the first Cambridge editors that "it is almost certain that he did not take the trouble to refer to, much less to collate, any of the previous Folios or Quartos," an emphatic assertion which is at variance with Rowe's own statement.[3]

Rowe himself says that he has taken care to redeem Shakespeare from the errors of former printings. He further remarks that he is unable to restore Shakespeare's text to the original manuscripts because they are gone beyond his investigation. There was nothing left for him to do but "to compare the several Editions, and give the true Reading as well as I could from thence. . . . In some of the Editions, especially the last, there were many lines (and in *Hamlet* one whole scene) left out together [*sic*]; these are now all supply'd."[4]

As a further note of possible proof in the discussion, there is the fact that Rowe's library contained the Second Folio and several Quartos of Shakespeare's plays. Unfortunately, the titles of the Quartos are not given. Of course, it is possible that Rowe acquired

[1] Allardyce Nicoll in *Studies in the First Folio*, p. 160.

[2] *Dictionary of National Biography*, art. "Rowe, Nicholas."

[3] *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 32-33.

[4] William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. Nicholas Rowe (London, 1709), Vol. I, Introduction.

a copy of the Second Folio after his edition of the plays was published.[1]

Rowe follows the Folios in sequence of plays. But he does not follow the Folios completely when it comes to act and scene division. The Quartos published during Shakespeare's lifetime and up to 1623 when the First Folio was published would have been of little use to Rowe in the particular problem of acts and scenes. The Quartos published after 1623 and the "reformed" Quartos, published from 1660 to 1709, followed the act division established by the Folios, with little or no attention paid to the scene division.

By the early part of the Eighteenth Century the interest in reading Shakespeare in the original was increasing. Shakespeare in the original on the stage was still not acceptable. The delight of the Restoration in pseudo-classicism, the belief that Shakespeare was crude and lacking in essential decorum, and the novelty of combining drama with music and new stage machinery, had all contributed to the "reformed" or altered productions: Shakespeare was rewritten and produced to conform to the taste of the time. Shakespeare on the stage was either turned into a theatrical merry-go-round or confined to the cage of the Unities.

But the reading public was interested in the original plays, and though Rowe deplored Shakespeare's lack of "Art," he was conscious of the artistic gifts of the Elizabethan. In a way Rowe anticipated Lessing, who, in 1767, freed Shakespeare forever from the inhibitions of pseudo-classicism. Thus it was that when Rowe attacked the task of an edition of Shakespeare's works, he was faced with the problem of how to restore the original. He did not do a satisfactory job, but it is not true that he produced a servile imitation of the Fourth Folio, or that the scene division which appears in modern texts, only slightly modified from Rowe's edition, is "the entirely gratuitous invention of an eighteenth century editor."[2]

In "editing" Shakespeare for act and scene division Rowe was faced with the problem as it appeared in the Folio texts. It is fairly obvious that the Quarto material was not as extensive as the Folio. From Rowe's rather cavalier treatment of the plays in the Folios, I doubt if he found much to work on in the Quartos, although such an assumption is pure theory inasmuch as it has been impossible

[1] See Introduction to Rowe, *The Fair Penitent and Jane Shore*, ed. Sophie Chantal Hart (Boston, 1907), p. x.

[2] M. Webster, *op. cit.* p. 58.

to collate the Quartos which Rowe may have seen. It is true, however, that the Folio collation affords an interesting picture.

What did Rowe do with the problem? Did he set up a basic system of his own for dividing the plays into acts and scenes? He might have known of the production methods in the Elizabethan theatre, which, after 1611, may have based an act or scene break on one of two principles. One may have been the principle of the "empty stage"; that is, whenever one group of characters quitted the stage, and before the next group came on the stage, there may have been an interval between these two actions which became a scene break. The other principle was perhaps based on a change of place within the actions. The shifting of the action from Venice to Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice* is an example. The "empty stage" practice was probably used in the early part of the Seventeenth Century, the place-change system possibly following later in the century. Did Rowe follow either principle?

The picture which emerges from a collation and analysis of the Folios with Nicholas Rowe's edition of the plays of Shakespeare can best take shape in a general survey. When Rowe approached his problem, he would have discovered in any one of the Folios that nineteen of the plays were divided into acts and scenes. These included *The Tempest, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Winter's Tale, King John, Richard II., First Henry IV., Second Henry IV., First Henry VI., Richard III., Henry VIII., Macbeth, Hamlet* (in part only), *King Lear, Othello,* and *Cymbeline.* With few exceptions the points of division into acts and scenes in each play occur at the same places in the four Folios.

Of the eighteen accepted Shakespearean dramas which remained in the Folios, twelve were divided into acts only. These included *The Comedy of Errors, Much Ado about Nothing, Love's Labour's Lost, Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew* (which had no second act indication), *All's Well that Ends Well, Henry V., Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar,* and *Pericles.*

Thirty-one of the Shakespearean plays have either act or scene indications in them. The remaining six dramas, which make up the accepted total of the thirty-seven, have no act and scene division whatsoever in the Folios. These include *Second Henry VI., Third Henry VI., Troilus and Cressida, Romeo and Juliet, Timon of Athens,* and *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Here was excellent opportunity for Rowe to accomplish a thorough revision of the problem of dividing the plays of Shakespeare into acts and scenes by following a logical system, basing it on a consistent principle, by using the theory of the "empty stage," or that of place-change to regulate the scene division, or defining one of his own. Or more simply he might have taken all the plays divided into acts only and the eight which had no indications whatsoever and worked out a plan which would follow the nineteen plays already prepared in the Folios.

With a peculiar inconsistency he did nothing of the kind. Of the nineteen plays, he left thirteen as they were in the Folios. The only exceptions to this occur in *Twelfth Night* and *First Henry VI.*, where there is a difference in the Folios themselves. In *Twelfth Night,* the Third and Fourth Folios have one less scene than the First and Second Folios, and in *First Henry VI.*, the First Folio is not consistent with the others. Rowe followed either or both the First and Second Folios in *Twelfth Night,* and either the Second, Third, or Fourth Folios, or all three, in *First Henry VI.*

The five plays out of the nineteen which were already divided in the Folios and which Rowe changed in the scene division were *Measure for Measure, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello,* and *Cymbeline. Hamlet* he changed both in act and scene indications.

Of the twelve plays divided into acts only in the Folios, Rowe altered the place of the act division in only one play, *The Taming of the Shrew.* But of these twelve dramas, he divided four into scenes. They were *The Merchant of Venice, Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus,* and *Julius Caesar.*

The six plays which have no act or scene indications in the Folios were divided by Rowe into both with one exception. This was *Second Henry VI.*

This means that Rowe actually made changes of some kind in only sixteen of the plays which he found in the Folios. These sixteen were *Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, Henry VI. Part III., Troilus and Cressida, Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Timon of Athens, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra,* and *Cymbeline.*. He left twenty-one as they had been published in the Seventeenth Century with complete act and scene division, or with act division only, or with no division at all.

In the sixteen plays with which he worked, Rowe displays marked inconsistency. In some of the dramas he alters the Folio

divisions but little; in others, he revamps the whole scheme. He makes his most astute decisions in the plays which he found undivided in the Folios. He seems to have analyzed the structure of the play, as in the instance of *Romeo and Juliet,* and made logical breaks in the rising action of the tragedy. In the matter of scene division, Rowe quite obviously follows the principle that the change of place effects a scene change. And yet, he is not consistent. He discovers place-change in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* to take but two examples, but in *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* where the Folios make two scenes occurring in the same place, Rowe does not recognize the division as being odd.

Nor is it quite possible to understand why Rowe should leave *Second Henry VI.* undivided when he takes the very next play, *Henry VI. Part III.,* which is not broken into acts or scenes in the Folios, and divides it. The whole treatment of the plays smacks of "armchair" editing.

Yet, modern Shakespearean scholarship is indebted to Rowe's act and scene division, particularly in his treatment of act indication in the undivided plays. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* edited by George Lyman Kittredge, and published in 1936, is a good example of this indebtedness. Of the sixteen plays which Rowe treated, Kittredge follows his act division identically in thirteen of the plays. These are *Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, Third Henry VI., Troilus and Cressida, Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello,* and *Cymbeline.* Rowe's scene indications are of less importance, because, although the modern edition oftentimes is identical with Rowe, there are in Kittredge, for example, only six plays which are entirely the same as Rowe's in scene division; whereas these six are identical with the Folios. The six plays in question are *The Tempest, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merry Wives of Windsor, As You Like It, Twelfth Night,* and *Winter's Tale.* Kittredge differs from the Folio scene changes in thirty-one of the plays, from Rowe in thirty-one.

And yet Rowe was in many ways a first editor. He may have been careless or indolent. He may have considered that he was presenting Shakespeare as the Elizabethans knew him, and therefore too much tampering was a a dangerous thing. Perhaps he held to that idea until he was overcome by what he considered a serious error. Or again, Rowe may have felt that there were certain cor-

rections which must be made to save Shakespeare from the neglect of the publishers. Perhaps he was appalled by the alterations which were put on the stage and felt that the true Shakespeare must be kept alive, if not on the boards, certainly between the pages of the book. Whatever his reasons, whatever the cause for not doing a complete piece of work, Nicholas Rowe planted the first seeds of modern editorship of Shakespeare. The tree which grew from the planting would probably have astonished the genial Poet Laureate.

STUDENT DRAMATIC ACTIVITIES AT YALE COLLEGE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

OTA THOMAS

When Yale College was founded in 1701, its chief aim was the training of ministers. Courses, student activities, and discipline were all established with this in mind and in conformity with a long-accepted pattern. Schooling in the theatrical arts held no place in such a scheme.

Changes caused by time and circumstance during the Eighteenth Century forced the Yale administrators, as well as those of other schools, to certain secular changes in the curriculum, such as the introduction of the study of the English language and literature; the addition of forensic disputation, surveying, navigation, anatomy and geography. But even these compromises with the demands of the times failed to bring anything but frowns and prohibitions with respect to the drama. Yet, during the latter half of the century, even the disapproval and threats of the authorities failed to check the ebullience and enthusiasm of the New Haven lads for the "footlights." Since theatrical proclivities could not be indulged in by way of the curriculum, entrance to this forbidden field of activity was gained through extracurricular means—chiefly, if not entirely, through the activities of the student literary societies.

The Linonia Society, the first powerful and long-lived student literary society in America, was organized on the Yale campus in 1753. For decades this Society was to remain a vital and important force in college life at Yale. Theatrical productions, of course, were but one of its many activities. However, the story of this one facet of its operations provides an interesting and enlightening tale in itself.

In 1756, three years after the birth of Linonia, a vivid memorandum appeared in the *Faculty Judgments;* the "whereases" of which, containing various indictments and opinions of student activities of a dramatic nature, follow:

> Whereas it appears that a play was acted at the house of William Lyon (a tavernkeeper on State street), on the evening after the 2d, 6th, 7th and 8th days of January instant, and that all the

> students (excepting some few) were present at one or other of those times, and many of them continued there until after 9 of the clock, and had a large quantity of wine, and sundry people of the town were also present. And whereas this practice is of a very pernicious nature, tending to corrupt the morals of this seminary of religion and learning, and of mankind in general, and to the mispence of precious time and money.[1]

Therefore, it was resolved that, for their levity and daring, the actors, all of them students, were to be fined three shillings each, and student members of the audience, eight pence each.

Whether this theatrical venture was directly or indirectly a part of the activities of the infant Linonia Society cannot be said, because the known records of the group begin only with the year 1768. However, some organization must have carried on this activity and, judging from Linonia's later history, its members may well have been the culprits. For, on December 15, 1768, the first entry of the Linonia Society extant records that the group had "voted to act a comedy the first Wednesday of each month."[2]

The year 1768 also marked the advent of the second great literary society on the Yale campus—that of the Brothers in Unity. The aims and activities of this group were similar to those of the Linonia Society, but it is only after 1782 that its history can be garnered from its own records. Therefore, the Linonian minutes will have to bear the burden of re-creating the picture of the students' theatrical activities at Yale until that year.

The big yearly event on the calendar of the Linonia Society was its anniversary celebration, held in late March or April.[3] Preparations for the occasion were started well in advance of the date of performance. Thus, on January 2, 1771, twelve members of the Society were assigned roles in Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers,* allowing them three months of preparation. At the same time, twelve other students were cast in "a farce call'd the Toy Shop."[4] However, March, April and May passed without the customary

[1] Franklin Bowditch Dexter, "Student Life at Yale in the Early Days of Connecticut Hall" in *A Selection of the Miscellaneous Historical Papers of Fifty Years* (Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Co., New Haven, 1918), p. 271.

[2] Records of the Linonia Society, Vol. I, December 15, 1768 to July 8, 1790.

[3] The Brothers in Unity held quarterly exhibitions. In their records these are at times referred to as anniversary exercises also.

[4] Of all the plays presented at Yale before 1800 by the societies, *The Toy Shop* was the only one listed in Frank Pierce Hill's *American Plays, Printed 1714-1830.* (Stanford University Press, 1934), p. 152. And the play was listed there only as an example of early American plagiarism, for its author was the Englishman, Robert Dodsley. However, it appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* in 1737 as an American contribution. But clearly the New Haven boys at the time were followers of the English theatre and not that of their native America.

anniversary exhibition. Finally, on June 3, the gala day was celebrated, the performance having been postponed for "well known reasons."[1] But only half of the original program was given—*The Toy Shop* alone was acted.

During the following years only one play was produced each "season." In 1772, the selection fell on Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem;* Cumberland's *The West Indian,* replete with prologue, epilogue and fourteen characters, was the choice for 1773. A description of the public acclaim *The West Indian* received follows:

> Both the scenery and the Action were on all hands allowed to be superior to anything of the kind heretofore exhibited on the like Occasion. The whole received peculiar Beauty from the Officers appearing dress'd in Regimentals, and the Actresses in full and elegant suits of Lady's apparel. The last scene was no sooner closed than the company testified thier [*sic*] satisfaction by the clapping of hands. Between the third and fourth Acts a musical dialogue was sung between Fenn and Johnson in the characters of Damon and Clora which met with deserv'd applause. An Epilogue made expressly on the occasion and deliver'd by Hale 2d was reciev'd [*sic*] with approbation. The musical Dialogue was then again repeated.[2]

What the reaction of the College administration was to the performance is not revealed, but it must be remembered that the costuming of the female characters in this production was undertaken in the face of the College regulations which provided that:

> If any scholar shall be Guilty of . . . Uncleaness, Lascivious Words or Actions, Wearing woman's Aparrel, Defrauding, . . . He shall be Punished by Fine, Confession, Admonition or Expulsion, as the Nature and the Circumstances of the Case may Require.[3]

An even more ambitious program was tackled in 1774 when two performances were staged—*Neck or Nothing* and *The Wonder! a Woman Keeps a Secret. Neck or Nothing,* written by David Garrick, was an imitation of Lesage's *Crispin rival de son maître. The Wonder* was from the pen of Mrs. Susanna Centlivre who, appar-

[1] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.,* June 3, 1771.

[2] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.,* April 13, 1773.

[3] Laws of Yale College 1754, printed in Franklin Bowditch Dexter's *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History* (Henry Holt & Co., 1896), Vol. II, p. 7.

ently, was quite a popular playwright with the students for they produced several of her creations during the late Eighteenth Century.

Neck or Nothing scored a signal success. An entry in the Linonia records for April 17, 1774 reads:

> The Natural drollery of the Farce assisted by the utmost propriety of action gave satisfaction easier imagined than described, but truly such as none who heard it will ever want to look upon this Narration to perpetuate in their minds.

Nor was the production of *The Wonder* less noteworthy, for the records go on to say:

> The honor the Actors acquir'd by this exhibition would be sullied should I attempt an Elogium upon it since 'tis plainest writ upon the minds of those present.

In 1775, dark days fell upon the Colonies. The tension of the impending war was felt in the academic halls at New Haven. In February of that year the students started military training among themselves.[8] When, on April 21, 1775, news arrived in New Haven of the Battle of Lexington, some of the students left for home and school was dismissed the following Monday, nearly two weeks before the regular date set for the beginning of vacation. Studies were not resumed until May 30, and by that time some of the students had joined the Continental forces.[1] In the excitement and preoccupation of the times, the annual festivities of the societies were temporarily suspended. But, the records of the Linonia Society for April 9, 1776, show that the students decided "as things at present wear a more favourable aspect and our Country appears not to be in so great danger" that they would have their celebration, conceding only that their exercises should be less public and less expensive. Steele's *The Conscious Lovers,* originally scheduled for performance in 1771, was produced.

This production, apparently, was like the last flare-up of the candle's flame before it burns out, for the following years were empty ones for the drama at Yale. Preparations were made for the productions of plays, and actors were cast in them, but there is no record of their actual performance. Indeed, it would have been strange had the plays been produced in the midst of the stress to

[1] F. B. Dexter, *Annals, op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 545.

which the College was being subjected. In March of 1778, food supplies became so difficult to procure that school at New Haven was again dismissed for the last two weeks of the month.[1] When the educational process was resumed the classes were ordered to assemble at various inland towns, and for more than a year three tutors instructed their classes in three different towns.[2] Even so, the College returned to New Haven somewhat too soon for, on July 5, 1779, the British troops invaded the town. Napthali Daggett, the former President of the College, and student volunteers participated in the battle to resist them.[3]

However, not all that war entailed could completely submerge the students' interest in the theatre. On November 18, 1779, approximately four months after the British invasion of New Haven, the records of the Linonia Society show that the Society had voted to tax each member the considerable sum of eighteen dollars; the funds to be used for purchasing books, chief among which, and first to be designated, was "a Sett of Books (twenty Volumes in Quarto) entitled the British Theatre."

The spring of 1781 brought a definite resumption of dramatic activities at the College. Anniversary exercises were deemed appropriate once again as, according to the Linonia records of March 30, 1781, "things wear a more favourable aspect, and as Linonia is now in a most flourishing condition." And flourishing the Society must have been, because it triumphantly produced two plays. Colley Cibber's tragedy, *Ximena, or, the Heroic Daughter,* with ten characters, was first on the program. After refreshments, the entertainment proceeded in a lighter vein when fourteen members of the Society appeared in a comedy, *Love Makes a Man, or The Fop's Fortune,* by the same author.

But these yearly productions were not the only histrionic efforts of the students. Almost all of the regularly scheduled meetings included one or more dialogues on the program. For a time there were only two or three participants in these exercises, but the comments upon them implied that the dialogues were not always exercises in dialectics. The parts were "acted" and not "spoken"[4] and

[1] *Ibid.* p. 642.

[2] Edward B. Coe, "The Literary Societies," in William L. Kingsley's *Yale College* (Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1879), Vol. I, pp. 312-313.

[3] *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles,* ed. F. B. Dexter (Scribner's Sons, New York, 1901), Vol. II, pp. 333-334.

[4] Records of Linonia Society, *op. cit.,* August 23, 1781. Three dialogues were acted. "The actors may be said to have done honor to themselves and to the society." The term dialogue was rather freely used as roughly synonymous with plays during this period. *Dramatic Dialogues for the Use of Schools,* published in 1798, included comedies and tragedies in many acts.

no doubt, these dialogues were short skits written by the members of the societies.

And what had happened to the College's disapproval of these theatrical activities? It might seem that all had been clear sailing for these extracurricular ventures into the theatre. Actually, this was not so, for despite their forbearance, the authorities were greatly concerned with the dramatic inclinations of the students and the flagrant violation of college regulations. The President, Ezra Stiles, was fully cognizant of the situation when he wrote:

> There are two academic Fraternities in College; the *Linonian,* & that of the *Brothers in Unity*: . . . In both Societies many have had an ardent Desire to act Tragedies and other dramatical Exhibitions at their Anniversaries. They have carried all Things secret in the Anniversaries hitherto. Yet lately invit^{g} Gent. and Ladies in T^{o} their Entertainments and dramatic Exhibitions have become of Notoriety no longer to be concealed. The general Sense of the Members of both has been against carrying dramatical Exhibitions to the greatest Length: others have been zealous for the whole Drama; & a Litigation has arisen in each to the height of vehement personal Reflexion & Abuse. . . . And I understand that yesterdy was formed a third Society consist^{g} of a Secession from both others, & that last Eveng they held an annivers^{y} Festivity or rather Commencem^{t} of the Society, at D^{r} Northrops where they acted a Tragedy. . . . However I believe it all for the best—a purification of the 2 first Societies from their gay jovial tumultuous Members, & an aggregation of the wild Characters in College into a Society, in which they will either in the first plan act out themselves so boldly as to necessitate a suppression by Authority, or else be induced to Reform^{a} & Regularity by Advice & Danger of incurring the Animadversions & Restrictions of the Corpor^{a} as well as executive authority.[1]

But the President was unduly optimistic when he predicted "a purification of the 2 first Societies from their gay jovial tumultuous members," for less than two weeks after he had penned these words, the Linonians produced the tragedy, *Tamerlane,* and the comedy, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife.*[2] Even the "purified" had acted too

[1] E. Stiles, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 14-15. The Linonia records confirm the President's information, listing a group of dissenters as of March 1782.

[2] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, April 18, 1782. *Tamerlane* was probably by Nicholas Rowe. The comedy was the second of Mrs. Centlivre's plays to be acted by the Society.

boldly this time. There were those who felt that the College was gaining an unsavory reputation by countenancing the theatricals. A former mathematics professor, Nehemiah Strong, complained that the scholars were too inclined to " 'the rapturous transporting Displays of the *Stage* . . . which are calculated only to warm the imagination.' "[1] While Jonathan Welles, an ex-tutor, feared that the collegians had " 'left the more solid parts of Learning & run into Plays and dramatic Exhibitions chiefly of the comic kind & turn'd College . . . into Drury Lane.' "[1] Since the situation had not automatically resolved itself through the secession of the "wild characters" from the societies, the authorities took action. The minutes of the Linonia Society for December 21, 1782, read:

> . . . that [as] it is forbidden by the authority of the College to have plays acted at the Anniversary there should be two orations, and four dialouges [*sic*] delivered. . . . That each class shall have one Dialouge, the number of characters not exceeding twelve. That they might either write it themselves or select it from an Author.

The result of this attempt to force the students to relinquish their love for acting was amusing, for when the Linonian's April celebration was held, a humorous dialogue appeared on the program instead of a play. Among the characters in this dialogue were: "Esquire Grimsey—an avaricious miser who has two Sons educated; Johnny Grimsey—the oldest Son a profligate rake who was married to Susy Pincost; Solomon Grimsey—the youngest Son a sober minded studious youth unmarried;"[2] and many others. Apparently the authorities had only succeeded in changing the name of the performance and, besides, had stimulated the students to the creative art of playwriting!

During 1784, theatrical activities at the College gathered further momentum. The Brothers in Unity even went so far as to petition the College authorities for permission to present their quarterly exhibitions publicly. When this permission was refused, the group philosophically "resolved on a private quarter; and directed the dialogues of Messrs. Greene and Bidwell (which were prepared for public exhibition the last year, but through an unfavourable con-

[1] Alexander Cowie, "Educational Problems at Yale College in the Eighteenth Century," Committee on Historical Publications, Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut (Yale University Press, 1936), p. 29.

[2] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, April 8, 1783.

currence of circumstance were omitted) to be exhibited on said quarter day; accordingly appointed the actors who then had parts in those dialogues to perform the same."[1] The day before this exhibition was held, the Linonians celebrated their anniversary at the State House, boldly presenting two unnamed farces and the tragedy, *Ulysses*.[2] The following day the Brothers, having more discreetly labeled their offering a "dialogue," presented *The Modern Mistathe* with eleven characters, a prologue and epilogue.[3] Again in August and December of the same year the Brothers presented elaborate dialogues. Apparently by this time the philosophical resignation of the Brothers, engendered by the administration's refusal to permit them to perform in public, had worn off. The first of these dialogues was admittedly and triumphantly "publick"; the performance was of *The Farmer* and involved six characters.[4] So, through student defiance and various maneuverings, 1784 turned out to be an active year for the drama at Yale.

As the years rolled on, plans for performances continued to be made well in advance. It was typical that on December 30, 1784, parts were assigned to the members of Linonia who were to appear in the tragedy, *Alexander the Great*, and the comedy, *The Busy Body*, during the April festivities.[5] Similarly, on January 7, 1785, the Brothers selected a group "to pick a Tragedy and a Comedy and to distribute the parts." The committee carried out its order explicitly. On March 31, an exhibition was held at the Courthouse and ". . . the gentlemen graduates honoured the Society with their presence; likewise several other gentlemen—of the first characters of the city were invited, and present: the exercises were 'Love makes a man,' a Comedy, and Edward the black Prince, a Tragedy—"[6] So, the Brothers, too, broke away from the "dialogue" subterfuge and in a far from private manner presented their plays. Four theatrical productions during the spring of 1785 must have seemed like a festival crowning a winter of rehearsals.

[1] Records of the Brothers in Unity for February 19 and March 11, 1784, p. 9 and p. 10.

[2] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, April 2, 1784.

[3] Records of the Brothers in Unity April 3, 1784. "The whole conduct of the quarter received the approbation and applause of the graduates. . . . The other dialogue fail'd by reason of Woodruff's having the small pox."

[4] *Ibid.*, August 9, 1784.

[5] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, December 30, 1784. At least three tragedies by the same title were available for production at that time. Likewise, two comedies called *The Busy Body* were in existence; very likely the students used the one written by Mrs. Centlivre toward whose works they had already shown a definite inclination.

[6] Records of the Brothers in Unity, March 31, 1785. Epilogues and prologues were attached to both performances and both involved an impressive number of actors. Cibber's *Love Makes a Man, or, The Fop's Fortune* had been produced by the Linonians four years earlier.

Perhaps it was too much of a festival for an ominous note was sounded in the societies' records early in the following year. In February, without explanation, the Brothers in Unity voted to postpone their spring celebration.[1] On March 16, both societies met and adopted what must have been unwelcome courses of action. The Brothers voted to delay their festivities indefinitely,[2] and the Linonians to omit the tragedy and the comedy from their yearly exercises.[3] Was it merely coincidence that both groups should suddenly abandon the theatre? Or that the Linonians should feel impelled to return to their rooms "stepping as light as if we stood on hot Beans?"[3]

After this setback, no theatrical activity was in evidence on the campus until December 29 of that year when, according to the records of the Brothers, they again met at the State House for a quarterly exhibition. In spite of the spring's abandoned projects, two "dialogues" were acted—*The Ridiculous Frenchman* and *Arnold's Conquest of New London*.. Then, in March of the next year, the Linonians celebrated their anniversary in the same edifice. A comedy, *The Inconstant, or, The Way to Win Him,* by George Farquhar, and a tragedy, *The Brothers,* appeared on the program.[4]

By this time the patience of those responsible for the serious education of the college thespians must have worn thin. At the end of 1782 they had prohibited the acting of plays at the anniversary celebrations and yet, within a few months after this prohibition, the students were acting elaborate dialogues; in a little over a year, at least one tragedy had been performed; and in less than two and one half years, New Haven had, from the administration's point of view, the doubtful honor of sheltering four major student productions—all staged within a period of two weeks. Clearly, the rules and regulations had been openly defied. So, once again, during most of 1786, there was a lull in the dramatic activities at the College—a lull which, no doubt, was occasioned by the firm reassertion of college discipline.

But, during the first months of 1787, signs of student theatrical activity reappeared. This was the time and cue for serious action by the administration; action which had to be taken to prevent

[1] *Ibid.*, February 23, 1786. At a meeting on December 1, 1785, a committee had been appointed to select plays for the anniversary of the succeeding quarter, so the postponement was not due to lack of planning.

[2] *Ibid.*, March 16, 1786.

[3] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, March 16, 1786.

[4] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, March 1787 (no day given). Three possible versions of *The Brothers* might have been given. One of these was by Richard Cumberland whose *The West Indian* had earlier been acted by the Society.

another "debacle," and which forced the Linonians to a concession. The Society's minutes for December 20 read:

> The authority of the College having interposed, concerning our Anniversary, and forbid its being celebrated with the usual Exercises; viz a Tragedy and a Comedy, upon the severest penalty of the laws; Voted that it should be celebrated with two Orations and two Dialogues.

A week later, the program at the Brothers' quarterly exhibition, the first recorded in a year, also revealed the devastation of the latest administrative decree. True, two dialogues were included in their exhibition but their titles, *Upon the Adoption of the Constitution* and *Upon the Disturbances in Massachusetts*,[1] show that they were scarcely amenable to dramatic treatment.

As a result of the administrative intervention, 1788, the year following, was a quiet one for the drama at Yale. But, this also proved to be only a lull. Plans were in the offing, though the only visible glimmer of activity appeared in November when the minutes of the thirteenth show that the Brothers voted to invite members of Linonia and "an audience of Gentlemen and Ladies to the Quarterly exhibitions of this Society." However, 1789 was ushered in with a vengeance when, on New Year's Day, the Society held its exhibit at Mr. Abraham Bishop's theatre. An impressive audience gathered for the occasion; members of the General Assembly; ladies and gentlemen of the city; graduates residing in the city; and the Linonia membership. Apparently, everyone worthy of note except the College staff was there. *The Siege and Capitulation of Lord Cornwallis* was portrayed in a dialogue.[2] In April, the more daring Linonians produced a comedy "written elegantly by a Junior," and a "Tragic Dialogue."[3]

Again, the societies had defied the authorities and, again, the authorities asserted themselves. On September 5, 1789, the minutes of the Brothers read:

> . . . a number of students of both the Lynonian and Society of brothers in unity were ordered to attend the President of Yale College in the Library where, after setting forth valid reasons for his conduct, the President absolutely prohibited societies from future *public* exhibition.

[1] Records of the Brothers in Unity, December 27, 1787.
[2] *Ibid.*, January 1, 1789.
[3] Records of the Linonia Society, *op. cit.*, April 15, 1789.

Circumvention of this decree proved simple for the Brothers. On July 5, they voted to leave the doors of their place of performance open during their anniversary celebrations.[1] When the Society held its celebration later that same month, there was no need for open doors in order to secure an audience. The original decree must have been modified because the assembly included tutors, literati of the city, many respectable citizens and members of the College. Only the ladies were barred.[2] The audience witnessed a comedy, *Modern Knavery, Scholastic Pedantry, and Religious Hypocrisy,* and a tragedy, *Surprise and Capture of the Germans at Trenton by George Washington.*

For the time the College seemed content to compromise the issue if the students penned their own dramas and barred women from the performances. Indeed, it seems as if the authorities were forced to a compromise of this sort.

The intense seriousness with which students took an opportunity to perform in the dramatic presentations is revealed by the minutes of the Linonia Society for June 11, 1789. One of the members refused to pay the anniversary fees because he had no part in the tragedy acted at that time. He said that "He was Insulted by the Tragedian who was appointed by the Society to write the Tragedy and distribute the parts to whom he pleased, and he not having a part took it as an affront." The Society did not pamper the "insulted member," but ordered him to pay or be expelled.

The following spring, the Brothers abandoned one of their meetings to attend the anniversary of their rival society. The afternoon's entertainment included a comedy written by a senior. Another senior had penned the tragedy acted during the evening; the subject of which was the imprisonment of Columbus by Boradilla in Hispaniola, his return home in chains, and the execution of Guacanari, an Indian chief, and great friend of Columbus. "It was acknowledged by a judicious Sir, who formerly was a member of Brothers in Unity, that 'He had not heard better Dialogue . . . for several years.' "[3]

The fall of 1791 was the last time in the Eighteenth Century that either the records of the societies or those of the College reveal much about theatrical activities at Yale. This must have been a period in which the activities ended in frustration. Preparations

[1] Records of the Brothers in Unity, July 5, 1790.
[2] *Ibid.,* July 28, 1790.
[3] Records of the Linonia Society, Vol. II, 1790-1797, April 14, 1791.

for the Linonians' annual festivities were shoved forward by months. The authors for the comedy and tragedy had been appointed in August but no record of the culmination of their efforts, if realized, was made. Nor did the Brothers in Unity appear to have done better. They planned, on December 1, to include a comedy, a tragedy, a sentimental dialogue and three orations in their next quarterly exhibition. Three weeks later it was decided that an attempt should be made to receive approval for the public presentation of their program. The silence of the record, both as to the College's consent and to the exhibition itself, seems almost to shout the failure of the petition.

From this time until 1800, a curtain is drawn over student dramatic activities; a curtain through which only occasional glimpses of action can be seen. These glimpses, however, reassure us that the "play went on" even though its glories were not set down by student scribes. Certainly the advent of the new President, Timothy Dwight, in 1795, educational liberal though he was, judged by the standards of his time, did not give curricular recognition to dramatics. In his preface to *An Essay on the Stage* he said:

> If the Author has succeeded in proving that the Stage is an evil at all, he has, in proving that it is one of the first magnitude. An evil so great, continuous, and extended, ought to meet universal opposition in its progress. Were the struggle against it more determined, the result might be its extinction. . . .

Perhaps in his struggle against the theatre he forced the student societies to more discretion and moderation with their theatricals. That he actually suppressed them does not seem likely.[1]

Whatever may account either for the absence of dramatic activities or for the silence of the societies' records on the subject during the closing years of the century, the spirit of the theatre and the students' affection for it were not killed. For soon plays appeared upon the sacred Commencement platforms, in the very presence of the displeased authorities.

In 1831, the Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin in his *Annals of Yale College* expressed himself in unequivocal terms concerning this fact when he wrote:

[1] Both in 1797 and 1798 the Linonian secretary noted in the Society's minutes the appointing of authors for anniversary dialogues. On April 4 of the latter year three members were appointed to a committee to provide materials necessary for the anniversary to be held next meeting. In 1799, a brief account was made of the anniversary but minus any titles and descriptions which might throw light on the nature of the dialogues.

> It is not the purpose of the writer to speak of the moral or intellectual effect of theatrical representations, but under the full conviction that they cannot form a valuable appendage of collegiate exercises, nor add to the reputation of a literary seminary, he may be permitted to hope that they will eventually be excluded from the "Schemes" of Yale College, as they have already from those of most of the American Seminaries.[1]

Further on, the Reverend Mr. Baldwin, unintentionally perhaps, explained the conditions under which the students were performing when he wrote:

> . . . in the entire absence of scenery, unsupported by female actors, and on a stage surrounded by a venerable circle of clergymen and senators, every effort for dramatic display, at Commencement, must prove abortive. Cocked hats, laced coats, the fiery passions of war, and the voluptuous whispers of love, but ill assort with such accompaniments.[2]

And he concluded:

> . . . The cultivation of dramatic talent is a very unimportant branch of general education; and as the whole system is of modern coinage, and is not commended to our regard, even by the *"venerabilis aerugo"* of antiquity, it is hoped it may soon give place to more appropriate academic exercises.[3]

And thus had the battle entered the new century.

[1] Ebenezer Baldwin, *Annals of Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut, from Its Foundation, to the Year* 1831 (Hezekiah Howe, New Haven, 1831), pp. 195-196.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

NOTES ON LITTLE-KNOWN MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF THE THEATRE

by

FRANZ RAPP

The engravings in this article have been reproduced from lantern slides carried out of Germany in 1939. The photographic reproduction was done by Meyer Rosenblum.

The historical and graphic materials that follow are presented for consideration with the idea that they should be made available for study and examination rather than kept in a box for some unresolved, future purpose.

What is said about these materials is, naturally, just an outline. What one may be sure of is that the dates given are correct and that the references are all there are at hand at present.

The periaktoi is a species of three-sided prism which revolves on a central pivot and which is used for scenic purposes. The design that follows in Plate One is a ground plan with periaktoi used for a complete stage set. Two equilateral prisms form the setting of each side, and a larger one the background.[1] Three different scenes can be provided by painting sections of the scenery on the corresponding surfaces of the device.

The periaktoi was originally used in the Greek and Roman theatres and is the first known device for changing scenery. The architects of the Italian Renaissance revived it and re-developed it along the lines indicated.

The text of Vignola's book which accompanies the design says that a similar device was in operation in Florence, Italy, in 1569 which displayed views of that city and its environs.[2] It also says that the earliest known stage which changed its scenery in this way was seen in June 1543 at Castro, Italy, and was built by Aristotile da San Gallo (1481-1551).[3] It was not until two years later that Sebastiano

[1] The diagram published here first appeared as a woodcut illustration on page 91 of *Le due regole della prospettiva practica di M. Jacomo Barrozzi da Vignola. Con i commentarij del R. P. M. Egnatio Danti dell' ordine de' de' Predicatori, Matematico dello Studio di Bologna.* (Francesco Zanetti, Rome, 1583). See also, Günter Shöne, "Die Entwicklung der Perspectivbühne von Serlio bis Galli-Bibiena" (Liepzig, 1933), pp. 21-22.

[2] This design was made by Baldassare Lanci da Urbino.

[3] The date for the production on this stage is given in a letter from Claudio Tolomei to Antonfrancesco Renieri.

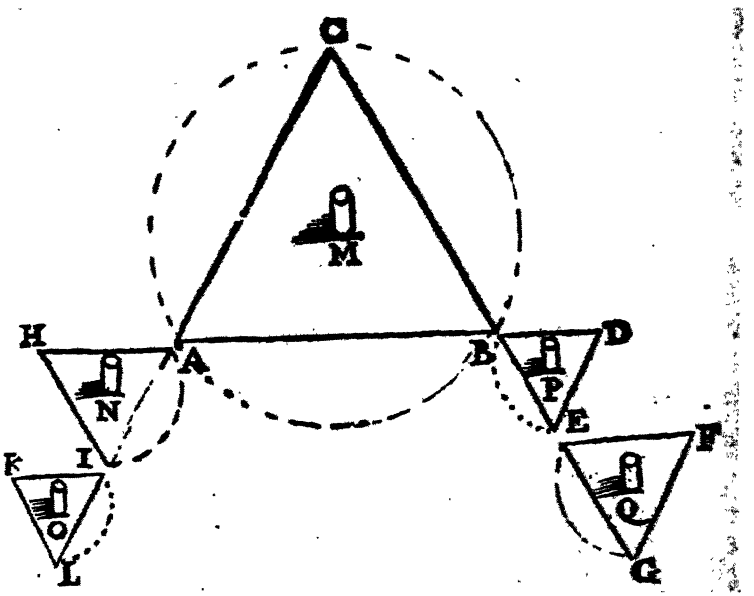


Plate 1. Diagram of a Periaktoi Set. 1583.

Serlio first explained the conception of perspective in unchangeable stage scenery in his fundamental work, *Secondo libro di Perspettiva*. This was almost a century before Joseph Furttenbach described the periaktoi device in his *Architectura civilis*,[1] and Jean Dubreuil published the third volume of his *La Perspective pratique*[2] in which he dealt with stage design and scene changes by means of periaktoi.

In 1928, Edward Gordón Craig published a design of a three-cornered device (*Triangulare Machina*) and a ground plan of a theatre with such a device at either side of the stage which he attributed to Antonio da San Gallo, the younger.[3] Now it would seem that this *Triangulare Machina* was a periaktoi device made by Aristotile da San Gallo.

II

Plates Two and Three show the ground plan and a longitudinal section of what was probably the first theatre designed with wings

[1] Ulm, 1628.

[2] Paris, 1649.

[3] *The Mask*, Vol. XI (1928), pp. 151 ff.

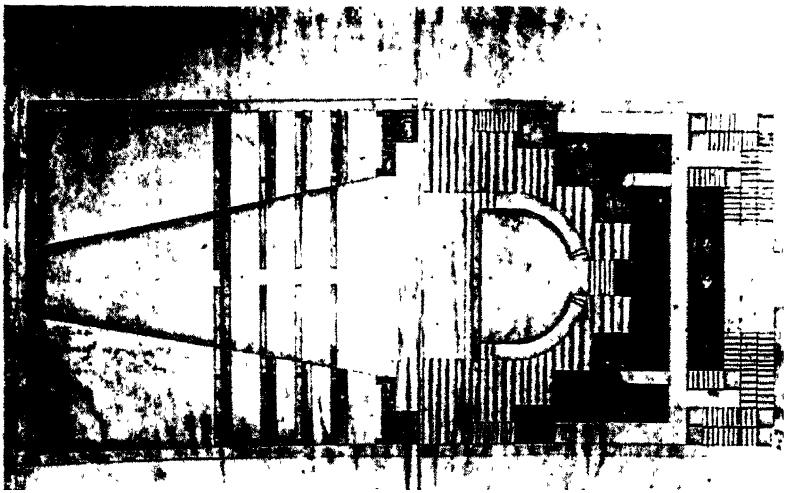


Plate 2. Sketch of a Ground Plan for a Theatre with Wings and Tiers of Boxes in the Auditorium. About 1606.

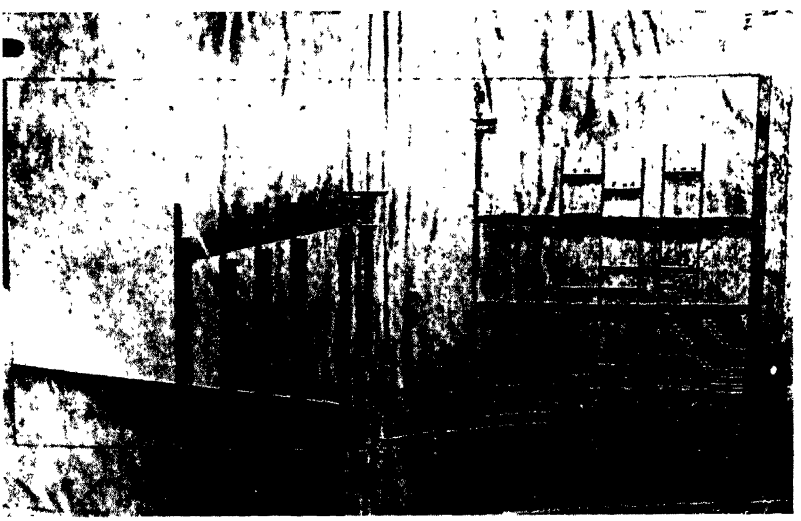


Plate 3. Sketch of a Longitudinal Section for a Theatre with Wings and Tiers of Boxes in the Auditorium. About 1606.

and with tiers of boxes in the auditorium. The sketches are from a scrapbook of Giovanni Battista Aleotti to be found in the Biblioteca del Commune in Ferrara, Italy.[1]

Aleotti (1546 or 1547-1636) was the designer and architect of the famous Teatro Farnese in Parma, Italy which was begun in 1617 and completed in 1618. The stage of this theatre was equipped with flat wings and drops, and so Aleotti has generally been credited with the creation and development of this method of scenic investiture. It is obvious, however, that Aleotti had had experience with this type of scenic investiture before he built the Teatro Farnese. The sketches in the plates prove that he had planned a theatre with wings previously, and as he was also the architect of the Accademia degl' Intrepidi in Ferrara, Italy, and had designed a theatre for the Academy in 1606, it is reasonable to assume that these designs are of the earlier theatre, the Teatro degl' Intrepidi.

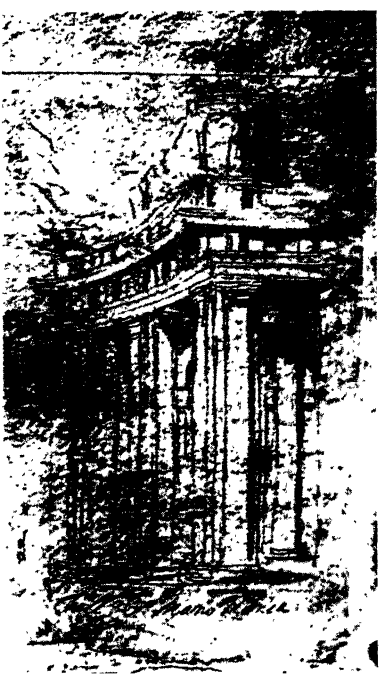


Plate 4. Design for a Wing by Aleotti for the Teatro degl' Intrepidi.

In Aleoti's scrapbook there is an almost complete set of cut out designs for a stage set which represents an antique city in flames. Other sketches represent burning structures, also. One of them, the sixth wing at the left, is reproduced in Plate 4. Its high structure, curved fronts, clustered pillars supporting an articulated entablature and frieze of brackets, and indicated scrolls above the attic, should be compared with an almost identical building to be seen in Plate Five. From this design alone, one can see that the setting in Plate Five was designed for wings.

Plate Five is the reproduction of an engraving which depicts a stage set of a street in an antique city with palaces, towers, obelisks and other fine structures, set in the proscenium of the Teatro degl'

[1] See Franz Rapp, "Ein Theaterbauplan des Giovanni Battista Aleotti" in *Neues Archiv für Theatergeschichte* (Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte, Berlin, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 79-125.

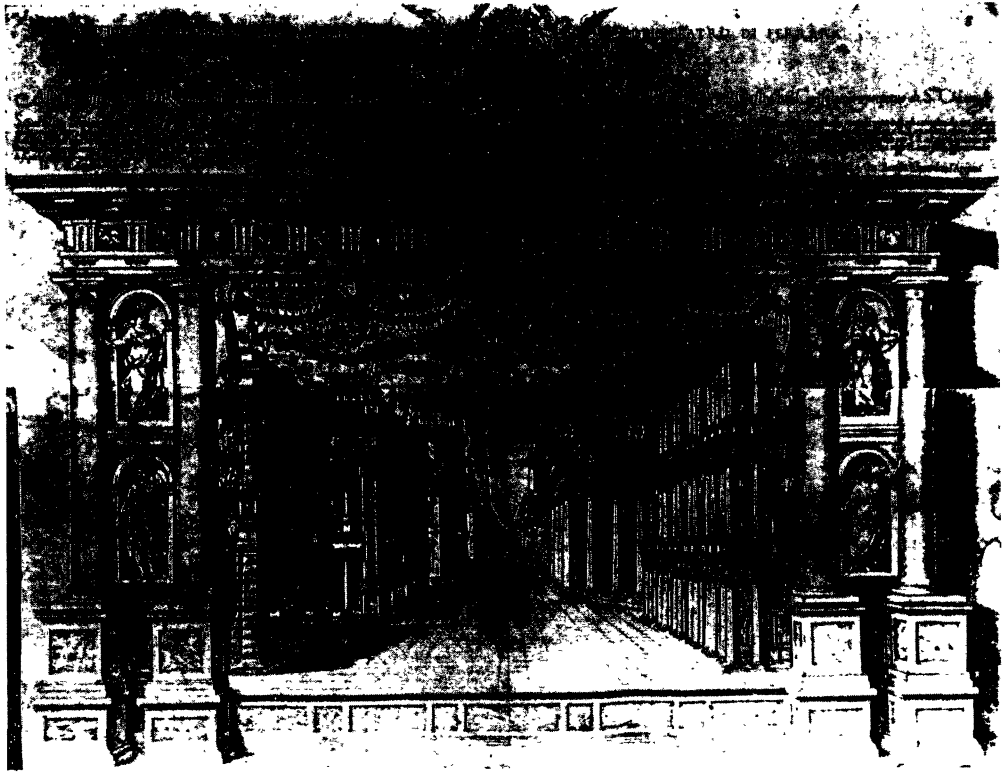


Plate 5. Wing Set of the Teatro degl' Intrepidi, Ferrara, Italy. 1618.

Intrepidi complete with the coats of arms of the protector and of the two presidents, and with the sign and device of the Academy. The original engraving was made by Oliverio Gatti for Aleotti who dedicated it to the Duke of Parma in February 1618, the year in which the Teatro Farnese was to be finished.[1]

We do not know very much about the auditorium opposite this stage except for the often repeated tribute to the beauty of its classical form. The early design, shown in Plates Two and Three, has an extraordinary arrangement of three balconies with boxes surrounding and backing a horseshoe-shaped compartment for royalty and guests of honor which forms the center of a sloping orchestra.[2]

In 1640, the building of the Teatro degl' Intrepidi was leased to the Marchese Roberto Obizzi, a member of that noble family to which the theatre and music, in both Ferrara and Padua, owed so much during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.

The Obizzi family had the Teatro degl' Intrepidi rebuilt in 1660 by the architect, Carlo Pasetti, who later worked in Vienna for the Emperor Leopold I.[3] The auditorium of the rebuilt theatre is shown in Plate Six. One can still recognize Aleotti's ground plan although the number of balconies has been raised from three to five and the galleries have been lengthened toward the stage.[4] Pasetti's structure is, however, richer as to the articulation and more interesting in architectural form. The two cupids, possibly part of a painted ceiling, carry the coat of arms of the Obizzi—a silver shield with three red bands. This coat of arms is also to be seen over the doorway. The building burned down in 1679.

[1] The title on the original print says that it is the design for the *Scena Tragica* of the theatre in Ferrara which, consequently, had to have a *Scena Comica* and *Scena Satirica* following the rules set by Vitruvius and Serlio.

[2] See Charles Niemeyer, "The Evolution of Baroque Theatre Design in Italy" in *Theatre Annual*, 1942, p. 37.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[4] The general scheme of this structure is similar to types pulished by Fabricio Carini Motta in his *Trattato sopra la struttura de' Teatri e Scene* (Guastalla, 1676). See also, Martin Hammitzsch, *Der Moderne Theaterbau* (Berlin, 1907), p. 43 and p. 44.

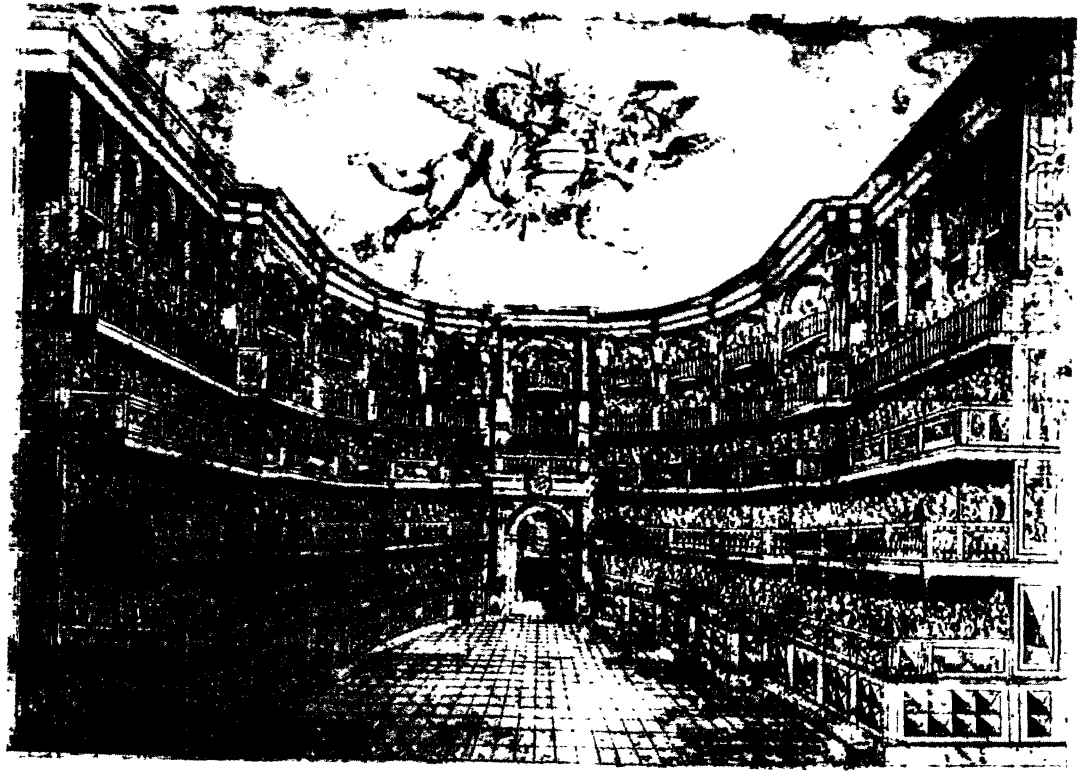


Plate 6. Auditorium of the Teatro Obizzi, Ferrara, Italy. *1660.*

III

The court theatre in Vienna whose auditorium and proscenium are presented in Plates Seven and Eight, was built in 1700 by Francisco Galli-Bibiena (1659-1739) for Leopold I. to replace the theatre built in 1667 by Ottavio Ludovico Burnacini[1] for the same sovereign.[2]

The earlier theatre was torn down when the Turks laid siege to Vienna in 1683. Thereafter, there were only provisional or temporary structures in Vienna until a new theatre was built in 1697 which burned down in 1699.[3]

This court theatre is of special interest because it was the prototype of other theatres built elsewhere in Europe by the Bibiena family. The theatre, erected for the Margrave of Bayreuth in 1748 by Francesco's famous nephew, Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena, is an example.[4]

In addition to the high baroque design of the theatre's extraordinarily decorated auditorium and the arrangement of various galleries inside the imperial box, note the curved, adorned parapet which separates the orchestra pit from the parquet. Attention should also be given to the trumpeter boxes, conceived as essential parts of the stage which is flanked by these highly decorative elements.

[1] See Flora Biach-Schiffmann *Giovanni und Ludovico Burnacini* (Vienna, 1931), Fig. 18.

[2] The inscription on the gable over the imperial box in Plate Seven reads: *Theatrum Hoc Quo Leopoldus I. Imperat. curis animum aliquando relaxaret Prefecto et Auspice Ferdinando de Molarth Fran. cus Bibiena Bononiensis fecit Anno 1700.*

[3] See Gertrud Rudloff-Hille, "Die Bayreuther Hofbühne in 17. und 18. Jahrhundert" in *Archiv für Geschichte und Altertums-Künde von Oberfranken*, Vol. XXXII, pp. 67-138.

[4] M. Hammitzch, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-161. See also, *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 56. Jahrg. pp. 1353-1359 where the condition of the building is described, both before and after its complete restoration in 1936.

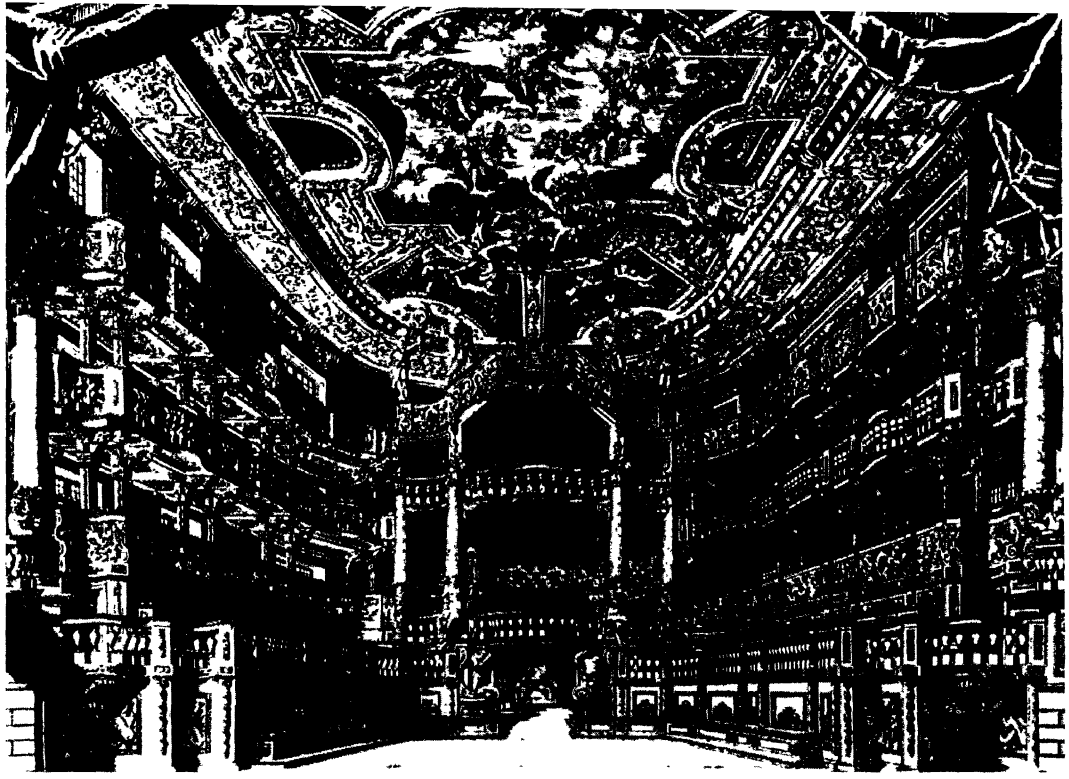


Plate 7. Auditorium of a Court Theatre Erected in Vienna by Francesco Galli-Bibiena. 1700.

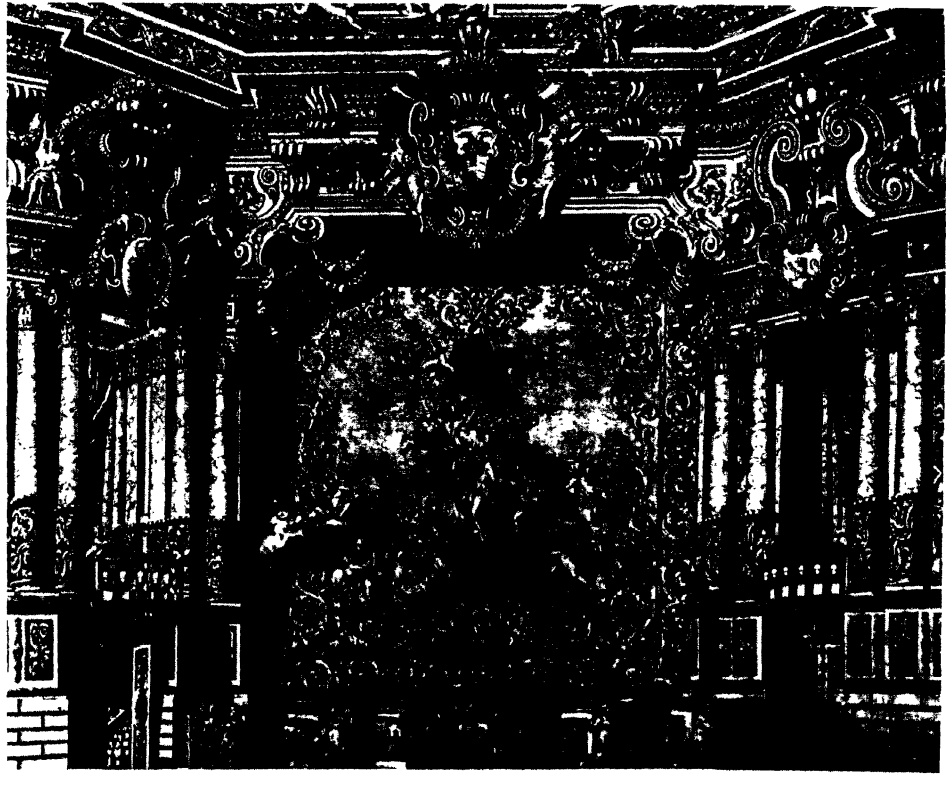


Plate 8. Proscenium of the Court Theatre Erected in Vienna by Francesco Galli-Bibiena. 1700

IV

The theatre at Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts) in the Palatinate was completed in 1776, and burned down in 1794. Designed by Johann Christian Mannlich (1741-1822),[1] its chief feature of interest is the amphitheatre of classical style which is revealed in its ground plan and longitudinal section shown in Plates Nine and Ten respectively. This classical form of auditorium, based upon Roman models,[2] had been revived by the architects of the Renaissance, but during the Seventeenth Century it had been superseded by the balcony and box designs expressed in the auditorium arrangements of such theatres as the Teatro degl' Intrepidi, the Obizzi and the court theatre at Vienna. Not until a new trend toward classical forms developed which also inspired a new application of classical conceptions to theatre building, were such theatres as the one at Zweibrücken built. In 1761, the theoretician, Vincenzo Arnaldi, published his eclectic project.[3] This was followed by the construction of several theatres, such as the one at Zweibrücken, presumably the first one to be built; the theatre in the Ermitage near Leningrad, designed by Giacomo Quarenghi in 1780[4]; and the theatre in the palace at Potsdam.

The structure of the theatre at Zweibrücken is simple. It is a rectangular building which contains nothing but the auditorium and the stage which has two stories of rooms for the actors behind it. Two flights of stairs lead down through the tiers of concentrically arranged seats to the parterre where the armchair for the prince and nine chairs for his guests were placed. The orchestra pit, between the parterre and the stage, is dropped below the floor level of the parterre and is separated from it by a simple parapet.

The stage takes exactly one half of the inner space of the building. The proscenium is formed by three Tuscan columns placed at right angles to each other. The stage is equipped with five pairs of wings, wing runners, wing ladders, and a back drop. In back of the stage, there is the *Fond du Theâtre,* a storage room, which was also used when a perspective setting of extraordinary depth was required. There are two *foyers* (green-rooms) and two staircases

[1] The original designs are preserved at the Academy of Fine Arts at Düsseldorf, Germany. The façade of the building and the longitudinal section of the auditorium are published in Mannlich's *Versuche über Gebräuche, Kleidung und Waffen* (1802). As to Mannlich, see Thime-Becker *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler,* Vol. XXIV, pp. 24-25.

[2] This type of theatre is illustrated in Sebastiano Serlio's *Secondo libro di Prospettiva* (Paris, 1545) and still is to be seen in Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Italy and in Scamozzi's Teatro all'Antica in Sabbioneta, Italy.

[3] *Idea di un teatro nelle principali sue parte simile a teatri antiche all uso moderno accomodato* (Vicenza, 1762). *cf.* M. Hammitzch, *op. cit.,* p. 100, Fig. 72.

[4] *cf. G. K. Loukomski, Les Theatres Anciens et Modernes* (Paris, 1934).

that lead to the upper floor. The stage machinery, visible in Plates Ten and Eleven, is very simple, consisting of a few windlasses above the grate.

A wide doorway in the façade of the building and two smaller ones lead into a corridor, and from there, over winding stairs, to a Tuscan portico which forms the upper end of the amphitheatre. The parterre can also be entered from two doorways symmetrically located at both sides of the building.

Mannlich's intention in designing the decoration for the interior of the theatre was to place the members of the audience in his Roman amphitheatre within a wooded park with a romantic pastoral scene facing them from the curtain. The curtain and proscenium can be seen in Plate Eleven. Over the proscenium arch there is a plaque with the monogram of the owner, Duke Carl August of the Palatinate.

The Egyptian obelisks in the auditorium are stoves and it is interesting to note that these heating appliances are connected with a hypocaust under the parterre where the royalty sat.



Plate 9. Ground Plan of the Theatre Building with Amphitheatrical Auditorium, Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts), the Palatinate. 1776.



Plate 10. Longitudinal Section of the Theatre Building with Amphitheatrical Auditorium, Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts), the Palatinate. 1776.



Plate 11. Proscenium and Curtain of the Theatre at Zweibrücken (Deux-Ponts). 1776.

V

The elevation and ground plan for a circular theatre building were designed between 1790 and 1800 by Lorenzo Quaglio, the elder (1730-1804). The theatre belongs in the attractive realm of "architecture that was never built" and the designs are presented in Plate Twelve, not only because of the theatre's unusual structural features, but because of the interest they might have for those faced with the problem of planning cultural and recreational city centers.[1]

As the classical exterior of the structure bears a slight resemblance to the Marcellus Theatre in Rome, one would expect to find an imitation of a Roman auditorium within. This is not the case. The ground plan reveals a rotunda, approximately 170 feet in diameter, enclosing the well-known type of theatre with balconies, boxes and a spacious stage. It has a seven room apartment for the manager, a second apartment for other purposes, a rehearsal hall, a large shop for the scene painter, and a ballroom, about 110 feet long and more than 30 feet wide.[2]

The inner arrangement of the building is shown in Plate Thirteen. The upper section reveals five tiers of boxes with a corridor behind them, a stage with a curtain depicting Apollo and the Muses on Mount Parnassus, and, in front of the stage, the parapet of the orchestra pit. A courtyard, on either side of the theatre proper, provides daylight and air for all the adjoining parts of the structure, even for the stage and corridors behind the boxes. The part of the building which faces the street contains the apartments, with corresponding rooms on the third floor, and a spacious attic. Two flights of winding stairs make all the levels accessible, and small passages on the ground floor lead from the street to the courtyards.

The lower section explains the parts of the structure in which we are most interested. Six of the arcades on the ground floor lead into the vestibule whose heavy pillars support the ballroom. The main access to both the theatre and the ballroom is the grand staircase (*Grand Escalier*) that leads in symmetrical flights to all the floors. The entrance to the ballroom is on the level of the second tier of boxes.

The curve on which this ballroom is constructed gives the architect the opportunity for a multitude of interesting views of the

[1] The plan of the ground floor and the elevation are published in *München und seine Bauten* (F. Bruckmann, München, 1912), p. 237.

[2] The ground floor has a vestibule with the box office, a coffee house, a carpenter's shop, store rooms and apartments for employees.

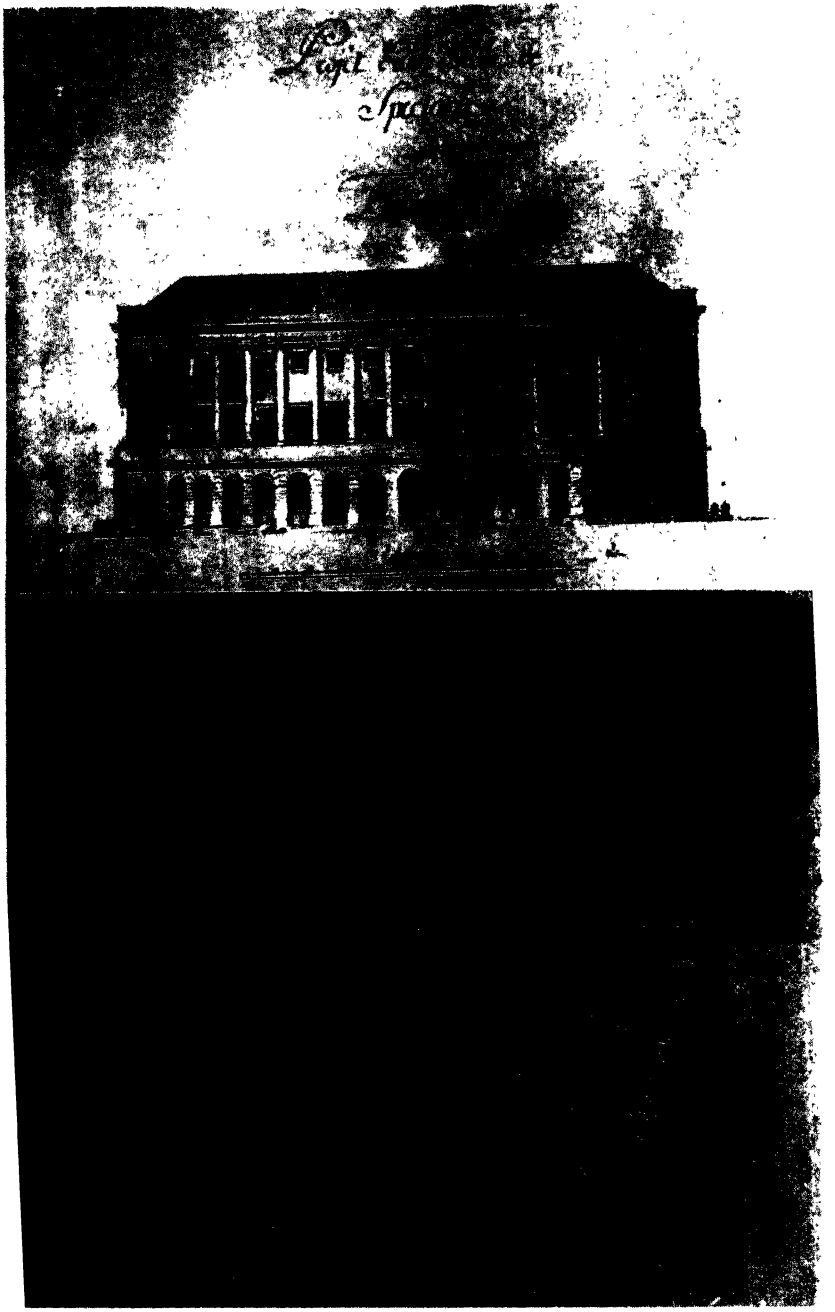


Plate 12. Elevation and Ground Plan for a Circular Theatre Building Projected for Munich. Between 1790 and 1800.



Plate 13. Cross Sections of the Circular Theatre Building Projected for Munich. Between 1790 and 1800.

interior. In fact, Lorenzo Quaglio achieved a very attractive arrangement by placing slender columns with elegant entablatures, on a socle, in a free rhythm along the walls underneath the vaulted ceiling.

The five tiers of boxes that form the auditorium are of almost equal height. Opposite the main entrance to the ballroom and on the same level is the royal box which is three times the size of the other boxes and projects toward the stage. The raked stage covers as much space as the auditorium.

This theatre was planned for the city of Munich. Almost two decades later, one was built there, designed by an architect who in no way followed Quaglio's design.

Lorenzo Quaglio came from an Italian family which for centuries sent its sons, talented in the fine arts, to make their livings north of the Alps.[1] He was trained in Vienna and became the court architect to the electoral prince of the Palatinate who eventually inherited Bavaria.

[1] See Thieme-Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler* (1933) Vol. XXVII.

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WAR AND THE JAPANESE THEATRE

by

Peter V Russo[1]

Not nearly enough is known about Japanese social psychology for us to comprehend its nature and understand the problem of the social re-education of the Japanese people. Engendered under "New Order" controls and under the spell of a partly manufactured and a partly historical social philosophy, present-day Japanese behavior patterns, seem to the Western mind not only unmoral and amoral but downright childish. And it is in this childish aspect of the Japanese disposition that the greatest danger lies, for it leads to individual and social actions which are incorrigible and uncontrollable because they are carried into operation by otherwise mature and emotionally full-grown people.

Anything, then, that can be done to throw light upon present-day Japanese social psychology, ideals and motivations, will be a contribution to the successful social and political re-orientation of the Japanese people. At least, this is my hope as I attempt to give some index of Japanese character through an exemplified, factual and realistic analysis of the social content of a number of Japanese plays and of the audience reaction to them during the period before the attack on Pearl Harbor and after the Japanese Army Command had seized upon the theatre as one of its most effective instruments of propaganda to lead the Nipponese down the road to war.

In Tokyo, before the war broke out, foreigners, like myself, who felt bored could always go to the theatre to watch the British Empire being destroyed for the equivalent of twenty-five cents. By paying a trifle more, we could also witness the sinking of the American Fleet with no extra charge for the annexation of California and two cups of tea. This, of course, was a more or less surface manifestation of the influence of the "New Order" in Nippon then well under way in the Japanese theatre. By this time, the playwrights, under government supervision, were already writ-

[1] Dr. Peter V. Russo, a Melbourne journalist and former professor of Modern Languages at the Imperial University of Commerce in Tokyo, spent some fifteen years in Japan before the war, studying the Japanese folkways and mores. His knowledge of the Japanese proved of great value to the Australian Government during the war. EDITOR'S NOTE.

ing drama which described past victories and made accurate forecasts of victories to come. Ishimaru's restrained writings on how to restore order in the British Empire and America always formed a colourful background to the finale which brought Eight-Corners-of-World-Under-Japanese-Roof—a world process known as Hakko-Ichiu.

The official repertoire of this modern drama restricted the subjects from which playwrights might draw inspiration. Sex farces were strictly discouraged because the militarists wished to direct their men and women to thinking in more warlike channels.

It was the Kabuki, the once despised popular theatre, which proved most effective in promoting love of war and intrigue, as conceived by Bushido, the Way of the Warrior.

However, not all the earlier Kabuki plays dealt only with samurai exploits. Many were heart-rending accounts of the delicate situations arising out of the love affairs between noble lords and Yoshiwara prostitutes. But the Army quickly directed that future Kabuki plays, particularly those to be performed in the country, should also abandon this sort of scene in favor of more stirring historic feats in keeping with the "New Order."

Probably, the patriots also considered it a shame that all the good work being done by the Kami-shibai, the children's theatre, was not being given further scope in the field of so-called adult national ideology. Once the patriotic influence had permeated the popular Japanese theatre and had eliminated this type of love story from the plays, the children could visit the adult theatre without having their little hearts rent by scenes of frustration. They could see living actors perform all the martial deeds and skillful harakiris which had become so familiar to them through the medium of the Kami-shibai.

Let us look at this children's theatre and the good work it did.

A few years ago, a Japanese primary school boy chopped up his little playmate with a magnificent samurai sword which he had stolen from a second-hand dealer. The father of the infant swordsman was greatly embarrassed and hastened to apologize to the bereaved parents.

Relations between the respective families continued strained until the police enquiry showed that there were strong extenuating circumstances. The child, said the magistrate, was not vicious. His apparently unkind deed was merely the result of his having been unduly influenced by the Kami-shibai, or children's paper-theatre.

The magistrate admitted that it was naughty of the boy to use a real sword with which to strike down his little friend. But he said the child could scarcely be called bad for wanting to emulate the heroic deeds of his samurai ancestors as represented in the Kami-shibai.

This decision was widely applauded. The *Teido Shimpo,* a Tokyo daily, while regretting the inconvenience suffered by the family of the less active child in the case, emphasised that nothing should be permitted to curtail the splendid work being done by the Kami-shibai to give the tiny tots their first realistic impressions of Japanese codes and morals.

Through the Kami-shibai, the Japanese child obtained an early insight into the theatrical appreciation approved by the authorities, and it was this children's paper-theatre which helped fashion his sensibilities into the militaristic pattern designed by his war-lords.

The Kami-shibai was not, as might be supposed from the influence it exerted, an official children's theatre housed in a large and modern building. It was, indeed, little more than the Japanese version of our Punch-and-Judy show.

The Kami-shibai was operated by one man who trundled his little stage around on the back of a bicycle. There were thousands of these travelling children's theatres and they were on permanent tour in the suburbs and countryside of Japan.

The Kami-shibai producer attracted his juvenile audience by beating wooden clappers and announcing that the show included a distribution of *sembei* (rice wafer and jelly). Few parents would refuse their children the attendance price of one sen (about a third of a cent), knowing well that if they should they might be called to account later by the district policeman for having deprived their children of patriotic instruction.

The curtain rose on the Kami-shibai, or paper-play, with the juvenile customers waiting eagerly to savour the pictorial adventures of their samurai heroes and to enjoy the dramatic interpretations made by the producer himself. The Kami-shibai stage, perched on the bicycle rack, was about one and a half by one foot in size, and it was fitted with slots which enabled the operator to slide the coloured plates or cardboard pictures rapidly and in sequence.

Each picture bore a small official seal, the censor's sign, indicating that the show had been passed as suitable for children. Inspectors called frequently on Kami-shibai proprietors to ensure that their productions measured up to the high standard required by

the authorities and that no unorthodox pictures had been included in the plays.

While manipulating his paper actors and arranging the scenic slides, the Kami-shibai man added realism to the show by howling, grimacing, whispering and leaping about, in the traditional manner of Japan's Kabuki performers. Gradually, the children came to realise that the theatre, as conceived by Imperial Japan, was not so much for the entertainment of the people as for their instruction in the "Heavenly Way" of national expansion.

Goggle-eyed and excited, the young audience watched and listened as the Kami-shibai presented the approved programme. It told of Gengo, the man-eating samurai, who once swallowed an evil Portuguese missionary whole. Gengo was also renowned for his mountain-climbing feats. It was said that mountain goats shrugged their shoulders with envy as they watched Gengo swinging from crag to crag with the greatest of ease. For some unstated reason, Gengo's lord became bored with his faithful retainer and ordered him to go away and commit hara-kiri. Although the lord was raving drunk when he made the suggestion, Gengo's sense of loyalty was such that he retired immediately to a back room and cut himself open according to directions. This play, said the Kami-shibai to the children, teaches you unquestioning obedience to your lord or superior no matter in what condition you may find him. The philosophical hook-up of this moral with the political concept of the emperor is obvious.

Another paper-play which was intended to appeal particularly to the little ones is the love story of Naiki, a samurai of the Satsuma clan, and Ko-fuji, a beautiful geisha. Its theme is also loyalty.

These two young people loved each other desperately and all might have been well had not Naiki's lord also become smitten with Ko-fuji's charms. What was Naiki to do? He could not be happy without Ko-fuji and yet it would be disloyal to refuse her services to his lord. Naiki and Ko-fuji discussed the problem and finally arrived at a clever solution: Naiki would turn Ko-fuji over to his lord, thereby proving himself loyal; but Ko-fuji would poison herself before the lord could approach her, thereby proving herself loyal to Naiki. In the meantime, Naiki would be kneeling in front of his family shrine disembowelling himself like a sensible and loyal samurai.

Everything went according to plan. The lord was naturally a little frustrated over the whole proceedings, but when he considered

how loyal everybody had been to everybody else, he spoke words of high praise, and presented the families of the dead lovers with bags of rice and a number of pickled cucumbers.

Children who were brought up on an almost daily diet of Kami-shibai soon learned to appreciate the finer points of Japanese Bushido. Most of their games were based on these picture plays and frequently no one was seriously hurt during the inevitable wooden sword fights and playful hara-kiris that resulted. Sometimes, however, as could be noted in the case of the boy who stole a real sword for the mock battle, the children were so carried away by Kami-shibai heroism that they could not feel completely happy without some blood-letting. The children were also looking forward to the time when they knew the Kami-shibai plays well enough to be taken to their first Kabuki drama by their proud parents.

The founder of the Kabuki, Japan's popular theatre, curiously enough was a woman. Her name was O-Kuni and she followed the trade of priestess at the Isumo Shrine in central Japan. According to fairly reliable native literature, she divided her time between consoling the priests attached to the shrine and arranging pious song-and-dance routines based on Buddhist scriptures. In time, she organised a troupe of female players that was favourably received by the Shogun (military governor) and his feudal chiefs.

The term "*kabuki*" is colloquial for something off the beaten track. The ingredients of Kabuki plays were fun, passion and fearlessness. Generally, they were too lowbrow to appeal to the aristocracy. They were, essentially, the drama of the common people as distinct from the rigidly classical Noh plays which were the gloomy divertissement of the aristocracy.

The female Kabuki came to an untimely end within thirty years of its creation by O-Kuni. Investigation had proved that the actresses were earning extra money by competing unlawfully with the local Happy-Willow-and-Joyous-Frolic licensed quarter. Deploring the loss of revenue resulting from these illegal backstage performances, the Tokugawa government prohibited women from exhibiting themselves on platforms or stages.

Due to this ban, the producers began to look around for comely young men with the required inclination and aptitude; and thus was originated, at about the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, the Kabuki tradition of Onna-Kata—of male actors taking the part of females.

Unfortunately, the young men who composed this Youth Kabuki soon became as suspect as had been their sister artists of the fe-

male troupe. In turn, their activities were suppressed and Kabuki producers began to realise that their shows might have a better chance of survival if their actors were trained and made to confine their activities to the stage. From about 1670, the Kabuki came to depend for its appeal on acting skill and story rather than on the beauty of the performers.

The desire of the common people to learn how the upper half lived and loved was responsible for the heroic trend in Kabuki stories. The myth of Bushido as propounded by Japanese militarists did not derive its popularity and strength from the roistering, uncouth activities of the retainers known as samurai. It was the Kabuki actor who played the largest part in convincing the Japanese masses that their lords and superiors lived up to a code of surpassing chivalry.

In spite of the way he exalted the samurai, the *yakusha* (actor) was not held in high esteem. There was a time during the old Japanese regime when actors were included in the census under the heading of livestock, a designation much resented by pious Buddhists with a high regard for animals.

When Japan became westernised to the extent of importing battleships and trousers, she also adopted certain attitudes which she believed would show that she had a thorough understanding of foreign culture. It was thought to be the correct thing to have a national theatre; a popular stage which could be pointed to as a contribution to the arts and letters. Thus, Japan suddenly discovered her own popular theatre. Some of the nobility even turned away from their exclusive Noh plays to see if there were any truth in Romain Rolland's dictum that drama which appeals to the common people has thereby proved its right to survive.

By the beginning of the Twentieth Century, actors had acquired a higher status in society and many were being patronised and subsidised by wealthy merchants. The cult of the Onna-Kata, or female impersonators, was revived and became doubly popular. This circumstance led to some curious social situations.

Young men once again devoted themselves to the art of being able to behave exactly like cultivated and nicely brought-up young women. So skillfully did these young men portray the graceful turns, side-twists and knock-knee trot of the lady of fashion that ambitious young damsels became regular Kabuki patrons in order to learn how to comport themselves prettily and seductively.

The extraordinary popularity of these female impersonators was frowned upon by military circles and die-hard traditionalists.

But, it did not bring down official wrath until the famous Tsuneko case in 1938.

The Japanese laugh good-naturedly over the way we do things back to front. A foreign practice which has amused them more than others is the one that prompts elderly gentlemen to hang around backstage entrances. In Japan, obviously because of respect for the Onna-Kata tradition, this sort of thing is done only by wealthy widows and prosperous geishas. The enraptured ladies first win their way into the heart of a female impersonator by sending him a gift of flavoured seaweed or a carton of raw fish and then pick him up after the show to take him to supper.

The Tsuneko in the case was an alluring geisha of rather jealous disposition who had bestowed her heart on Zaemon, an attractive female impersonator. Arriving one evening at the stage door, she was pained to discover that another lady had got there first. Tsuneko, spurred on by a base passion, forgot the seven rules of gentle persuasiveness and struck her rival harshly and frequently with a heavy parasol.

Tsuneko's side of the argument was taken up and supported by the *Yomiuri Daily* (circulation 1,000,000), while the rival found enthusiastic though numerically inferior support in the *Teido* (circulation 250,000). It was not until leading critics and stage managers began taking up space in the press which should have been reserved for reporting the final annihilation of China, that officialdom stepped in and forbade further backstage infiltration.

In 1941, according to the *Actors' Nikki* magazine, there were one hundred and fifty-four theatres throughout Japan which had revived *Chushingura* or *The Forty-Seven Ronin,* Japan's most sacred drama. Never had a play met with such astounding success in revival. Patriotic journals exulted in this sign of national regeneration, and commented that the nation of the forty-seven ronin would certainly destroy any foreign countries which did not believe in Japan's efforts to bring about co-prosperity and maintain peace.

Literally "ronin" means wave-men and is the term used to describe samurai without lords. The forty-seven ronin in the Japanese classic were deprived of their master under circumstances which later made them the foremost traditional heroes of Japan. The play gives one a clearer insight into what passes for militaristic chivalry and fair play in Japan than the reading of any number of histories. It also explains why Japanese Bushido delights in pranks and wiles which would cause the "verray parfit gentil" knight to shrivel up in his armour.

Here is one version of the classic drama that has inspired Bushido for centuries and that moved every Japanese soldier in the field to feats of emulation. This is what happened when it was produced in the theatre.

A country *diamyo* (feudal baron), Lord Asano of Ako, while at Yedo (Old Tokyo) in attendance on the Shogun, is called upon to conduct one of the most formal ceremonies of those times—the reception and entertainment of an imperial envoy. Asano, being a warrior, is not well versed in the ceremonial arrangement of tapestries, the logarithms of bows and obeisances, or the disposition of priorities of position. He, therefore, takes counsel with a city nobleman named Kira who, like a bad diplomat, knows everything about etiquette but little else.

Expecting to receive a handsome fee, Kira explains the rites due to one who is on speaking terms with a descendant of the Sun Goddess. But, unworldly Asano, foolishly believing that the information is being offered as a friendly gesture, gives Kira nothing more than formal tribute and the usual number of polite hisses.

Kira's objection to being treated like a gentleman vents itself in insults. He calls Asano a country lout and suggests that his mother had been on more than friendly terms with a strolling player.

As there is a certain amount of truth in both of these observations, Asano only winces and suffers in silence. However, when he is ordered to bend down and fasten Kira's footgear, Asano thinks it is going a little too far and, thereupon, to show his disapproval draws his sword and slices off a piece of Kira's cheek.

As this happens within the precinct of the palace, Asano is found guilty of desecration and is condemned to commit hara-kiri. Not even his heirs feel happy about this because his property is to be confiscated and his family declared extinct.

At the end of the first act, the members of the clan with their lord gone, become ronin, without master or home. According to this particular version of the story this happened in the month of April 1701.

The curtain rises on the second act which finds Oishi Kuranosuke, senior retainer of the dead lord, discussing with forty-six of his fellow samurai the best means of taking revenge. In vulgar parlance, they are on the spot. If they should kill old Kira, they also would be condemned to disembowelment; if they did not kill him, the best people would refuse to recognise them. They decide to become heroes.

But Kira himslf, for all his chicanery, knows something of samurai habits and has taken no chances. He has barricaded his house and moves about accompanied by numerous guards.

The tactics of the forty-seven ronin from now on should explain why modern samurai have an inbred taste for jungle warfare. Oishi draws up a plan of campaign whose main features are dissimulation, infiltration and, finally, attack.

They pretend to drop all thought of revenge and become smiths and artisans. As such, some gain access to Kira's mansion, and one with more enterprise than the others makes love to a housemaid and learns from her the intricacies of its corridors and gardens.

Naturally, the ronin are being treated with the greatest contempt by their old friends and acquaintances. Oishi, the leader, gives the appearance of being the biggest renegade, for without apparent reason he sells his wife and goes to live at Kyoto. Here he buys a proprietary interest in one of the inmates of the local licensed quarter, and spends her unsteady income on drunkenness and debauchery. A samurai of another clan who meets the degraded Oishi in the street is so disgusted that he spits informally in the ronin's face.

In this manner, Kira, to whom full reports concerning the ronin are being brought by spies, is lulled at last into a feeling of complete security.

Then, suddenly, during a violent storm on the night of January 30, 1702—two years after the hara-kiri of Lord Asano—Kira's mansion is forced by the reunited band of ronin; the complacent guards are slaughtered and Kira is dragged from his hiding place.

True to the samurai code, Oishi begs forgiveness of Kira for the intrusion and expresses the hope that Kira will avoid further unpleasantness by cutting himself open forthwith. Overcome with embarrassment, Kira refuses; whereupon the forty-seven doughty ronin hack off the old gentleman's head and throw the body in the courtyard.

The forty-seven ronin, their honour redeemed, return from depositing the head of Kira on the grave of their lord just when the official sentence arrives which condemns them all to commit hara-kiri. Through the hospitality of various neighbouring barons, they are given airy, comfortable quarters in which to disembowel themselves.

The curtain falls on forty-eight graves, not forty-seven, in the Sengakuji temple grounds where lie the heroic ronin. The samurai

who spat in Oishi's face, regretting his hastiness, had decided to be in it, too, and is buried with the others.

There is a belief that the Nipponese hate showing emotion. They do not give way as a rule, but *The Forty-Seven Ronin* got them. At the point in the play when the ronin forced Kira's mansion, killed his guards and dragged him from his hiding place, some young men in the back of the house screamed out the name of the actor playing Oishi. This was their way of showing their approbation of the excellence of the performance and the incomparable strategy with which all true samurai overcome obstacles. When these young men had quieted down one could feel the tenseness and anticipation of the audience as it waited for the logical climax. Some gaily dressed young women in the audience, from the Yoshiwara licensed quarter where the ronin had spent most of their plotting hours, had tears in their eyes.

During the intermission, while the huge stage was being revolved for the second act, there were postcards of actors and talismans on sale at the stalls on the mezzanine floor of the theatre. A sweet-faced old lady bought her grandson a handsome wooden sword for being a good boy. A kindly, old, ex-army officer stopped to talk with the child and show him the correct way to insert the small sword in the stomach in order to perform a neat hara-kiri. The old lady smiled benevolently and thanked the gentleman for his kindness. The Japanese are so very fond of children.

The significance of this play should not be missed. It is one of the most venerated plays in Japan's dramatic anthology. The hara-kiri aspects of the play are of secondary importance in the minds of the Nipponese; self-immolation is simply an easy way of saving or making face, or of avoiding an intolerable situation. What really moves the Nipponese to the depths of emotion in *The Forty-Seven Ronin* are the tricks, deceits, treacheries and simulations which the ronin practice to bring their plan of revenge to a successful climax. And let us remember that it is this characteristic of the ronin that the Nipponese interpret as ingeniousness or cunning—the greatest of samurai virtues. How can a Japanese be treacherous when he is doing no more than follow in the samurai footsteps of his own Knights of the Round Table—Oishi San and his forty-six henchmen?

The Japanese war-lords and patriots had Kabuki plays on hand to support every violent proposal they brought forward. The Kabuki was presented in such a way that it made the people feel that they also were part of the samurai tradition and it provided con-

vincing proof that a nation of samurai had the spirit and cunning necessary to take in the entire world. It would be hopeless for the decadent foreigner even to attempt to arrest the expansion of a Kabuki Nippon.

Thus, the patriots were sure of their Kami-shibai-dominated children and their Kabuki-ridden men. Oddly enough, the upheavals of wartime economy, whereby Japanese women had attained a degree of independence hitherto unknown, caused the war-lords no little misgiving regarding the effects the change might have on the traditional self-sacrifice expected of the inferior female.

A conscientious playwright in the pay of the Army, regretting the spread of dangerous thoughts among some of Japan's emancipated women, set out to remind them, in dramatic form, of their traditional obligations to Japan's warrior samurai. He uncovered an old Kabuki story in order to support his theme of feminine loyalty and to shame those women whose thoughts were straying from the samurai code. This play is called *Komatsu* or *War Horse* and it created a furore in Japan during the months immediately preceding the outbreak of the "Pacific Incident."

Here again, a brief summary of the play gives one a better insight into Japanese ethics and social values than any straight historical data.

We may introduce the theme by recalling that the rescue of damsels fair and the plighting of troths used to be a full-time job for our romantic knights of old. In far Nippon, the gallant samurai also had his sentimental moods, although his attitude toward his lady-love was far more practical. The story unrolls:

Ikuzo, a samurai of the Matsuura clan, is invited to a battle that is being held some distance away, but his horse is old and weary and he cannot afford to buy another one befitting warrior rank. Besides the reluctant horse, his only possession is a beautiful common-law wife, a Niigata maid, with lovely black tresses that reach to the ground about which he loves boasting to his friends. His anger, therefore, is terrible, when he returns home one day to find that Komatsu, his love and pride, has cut off her hair. Her only reply is to point sadly outside to a magnificent champing steed that is being led through the courtyard by a groom from the famous Yuri stables. Komatsu has sold her beautiful hair so that her master may have his horse and not be late for the battle.

Alas, Ikuso's satisfaction is short-lived. His new charger is so stately and handsome that it is out of the question for him to use the old shabby saddle and bridle. Once again he becomes fitful and

morose, and to escape the sneers of his friends he seriously contemplates taking the logical way out by killing his horse, Komatsu and himself.

Returning from another fruitless visit to the moneylenders, he finds, this time, no Komatsu at all, but, instead, an exquisitely inlaid saddle, expertly armoured, and all the accoutrements that go with a dashing war horse. A letter explains all. To make Ikuzo completely happy, Komatsu has sold herself to the licensed quarters, naturally at some discount owing to the loss of her hair, but for enough to provide the equipment desired by Ikuzo.

The curtain falls as Ikuzo rides away on his stage horse in full martial splendour, soliloquising on the superior qualities of the women of Yamato (Old Japan): "If all women were as noble and virtuous as my Komatsu, what a happy world this would be."

Well, that's that. I am sure that if you had attended the performance you would have noticed rapt looks on some of the young women in the audience. They were envious—how lucky was Komatsu to have such a splendid opportunity of showing her devotion in typical Japanese fashion! You would have seen a crowd of schoolgirls file out of the theatre after the play. They had been given a special afternoon off by their patriotic schoolmistress so that they could study the behaviour of Komatsu, the Japanese heroine. The next day they would have to write essays of appreciation to prove that they thoroughly understood the spirit of Japanese womanhood as represented by Komatsu.

The "New Order" trend of the popular theatre in Japan has been a faithful index of the extent of that country's military ambitions. But, above all, it has uncovered in a fashion startling to Europeans and Americans the extent to which the Japanese masses are held in line by traditions which, in effect, are voodoos and the manner in which the war-lords utilised this mumbo jumbo to keep their people at a pitch of frenzied, homicidal determination.

During the Pacific war, several cases were reported where young Japanese, moved by a popular military stage theme, had killed their wives and children before proceeding to the front. Their excuse, nationally applauded, was that they would not be able to concentrate wholeheartedly on the war if they were disturbed by domestic preoccupations.

The modern Komatsu was not wanting, either. Japanese women still mortgaged and sold themselves to give male relatives the patriotic face that goes with a classical sabre of Old Japan or an extra piece of superior equipment.

A PLAY IS NOT A STATIC THING

by

ELLIOT NORTON

George S. Kaufman—so the story goes—revisited one of his own comedies after a year away and was surprised to find it altered. In his absence, it appears, the star had taken a few friendly liberties. Having spoken all of Mr. Kaufman's lines for a matter of some weeks, she had thought of a few of her own which seemed more amusing; and since she considered his stage direction imperfect, she had made some changes in that, too.

Mr. Kaufman, his friends say, didn't care much for the changes and after the final curtain he went to a Times Square telegraph office where he sent his star a wire: "Congratulations. Your performance greatly improved. Wish I could say as much for the play."

A few months ago, in New York, another play was nearing the end of a long, successful engagement. Its author and its producer met for dinner, decided it was time to send their production on the road and agreed on a route submitted by the booking office. The next evening, the playwright went to the theatre to watch his drama for the first time in many busy months. What he saw so dismayed him that he closed down the play and indefinitely postponed the out-of-town tour. On his own word, his comedy had so deteriorated in performance that it had become a sort of self-parody.

Both of these plays, the Kaufman comedy and the other, were popular and critical hits. Each had been played with slick skill and stirring effect at a fine first night. Both had run for a long time and in running had run down. The one was the worse for the star's tampering; the other had been done in by actors who had tired of saying the same lines night after night and were now just walking through their parts without regard for the puzzled squirming audiences.

Very few stars are bold enough to rewrite the plays of George S. Kaufman behind his back. But it is nonetheless true that many plays are altered, some of them drastically, between

their first performance and their last; and it is equally true, though little understood, that the alterations can make a good deal of significant difference in the apparent quality of the plays so changed.

Though it will seem stable enough in the text, a play in action is not static. On the contrary, it is a fleeting, elusive and changing thing, which looks different and *is* different at different stages of its career.

This creates a special and curious problem for the practical critic of the drama, which is to say the critic who works in the theatre rather than the library: he must report and appraise the plays and performances he sees as though they were unchanging, when he knows, or should know, that they are nothing of the kind.

In the professional theatre of the moment, a successful play passes through three phases: preparation, fruition, and decline. The third phase is not inevitable, but it is, unfortunately, common.

In this commercial and commercially-minded theatre, most managers, actors, and playwrights aim at financial success. To achieve that, their work must be presented at its best on the first night in New York. For it is then that the critics of the New York dailies and the more influential magazines sit in judgment, and on their opinion, formed then, everything depends. This is well known.

What is less well known, but important to my argument, is that the glittering perfection of the New York first night is not achieved by swift legerdemain during the conventional four weeks of rehearsal. The rehearsal is only part of the process of preparation for the great night. The other part is the "tryout" during which the drama in question is placed experimentally before audiences of human guinea pigs, whose reactions are used to guide producers, directors, and authors in the refashioning of their work.

Among the least happy of the guinea pigs are the drama critics of the tryout centers: Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, and New Haven.

It is generally accepted as true that the whole quality of a play will not become apparent in rehearsals; that it must be presented on the stage before an audience if its real value is to be discovered; that when it is so presented, weaknesses and errors which could not be detected from a reading of the text and were invisible, too, during rehearsals, will invariably come to light.

I am beginning to believe, after eleven years of observation, that although there is some truth in this, it is less than the whole truth. It is my present belief that if the conventional play were given

eight full weeks of rehearsal, after the system in vogue in Europe during the pre-war period, a great many of the faults which pop up now in tryout would appear during the rehearsals, and could just as easily be eliminated at that point.

The truth seems to be that the three and one-half to four weeks which the unions allow for rehearsal are not enough. During the rehearsal period, actors are paid just enough to keep them from starving. After four weeks of this (during which time everyone else is drawing full salary, by the way), it becomes necessary to start paying the actors their wages whether they are working in a room in Bryant Hall, New York, or in the Shubert Theatre, Boston.

Since they have to pay, the managers seem to feel that they might as well take in a little money at the same time. So they present their imperfect, half-finished drama in a tryout centre. See it "prior to Broadway," they urge the public. See Naples and die.

Perhaps I am getting a little away from my argument. The important fact is that plays are first presented publicly not to that all-important first-night audience of Broadway, but to playgoers in some one of the tryout centres. It doesn't matter very much what the tryout town thinks of the play's quality: the vitally important thing is to discover and if possible to eliminate whatever faults may be latent in the drama before the New York opening. The important thing is to perfect the play and the performances during the two to six weeks commonly allowed for "tryout." If a little money can be made into the bargain, so much the better.

Invariably, some imperfections are discovered at the first performance in the tryout city. Some scene or other which read well enough in the manuscript and which may have delighted the cautious actors and the hopeful legion of backers at the dress rehearsal, will fail utterly to arouse the paying playgoers of the premiere. Performances which seemed effective enough will look less perfect; the lights will fail to work properly (this, it seems, is almost inevitable); jokes will fall flat in the aisles while embarrassed actors wait for laughs that do not come.

The play will be too long, invariably. If it is a musical, it may run as much as an hour or more beyond the conventional length. *Show Boat,* by way of illustration, was one hour and fifty minutes too long at its tryout premiere in Washington. Fifty minutes of the excess were eliminated with blue pencils before the second night's performance began; the other extra hour was nipped from the script and the score during three following weeks in Wash-

ington and Pittsburgh—well before that all-important Big Night on Broadway.

There are plays, as for instance *Our Town,* which are pretty nearly flawless at their out-of-town debut. There are others which are torn to pieces during the tryout weeks. Some lose actors whose work doesn't measure up to standard. Others require changes of setting or costumes. The producer of the musical *One Touch of Venus,* discarded entirely an ugly portal of heavy gray stuff which seemed to sit on that bright fantastic musical comedy and crush the gaiety out of it. For the judicious first-nighters of New York, Miss Cheryl Crawford bought a bright new setting of light fluffy material, which made it possible to accept the antic fantasy of the play as it was meant to be accepted.

Textual changes are common, much commoner than is generally supposed. Entire scenes and sometimes whole acts are rewritten. When *Winged Victory* had its first performance in Boston, for instance, the final climactic scene took place in a vast bomber winging out over the Pacific, with the crewmen talking to one another over the "inter-com." The final scene of the play as those lucky and unsuspecting New Yorkers first saw it, had no plane, no stage heroics, no vast roaring spectacle in its finale. The play there came to a close with a small, soft-spoken, tender sequence between two men of the bomber crew, a scene in a Pacific island jungle in which the one youngster read a letter from home telling him he had become a father and then sat down to write a note to his newborn babe.

The musical play, *Carousel,* tells the story of *Liliom* in a New England setting. Librettist Oscar Hammerstein, however, didn't like Molnar's police court scene and for his version, or the version that New Haven and Boston saw in tryout, he sent his Liliom (now Billy Bigelow) to a strange and dismal paradise. This celestial nook was a plain New England sitting room of the 1870-1880 period, whose occupants were a middle-aged "She" (who played the harmonium) and an elderly and rather surly "He." Baffled Billy Bigelow, led into the presence of these two, was told he could go back to earth and have a look if he liked. The wonder is he didn't try to jump out the window, for if that were Heaven, there was only one possible place to be.

The tryout established, as tryouts do, that *Carousel* stopped dead when that scene began and audiences subsequently never recovered from the setback. A conference was called and Mr. Ham-

nerstein came up presently with a new and delightful idea for another scene which he wrote in Boston and inserted just before the show got to New York.

New York never knew that *Carousel* had a heaven ruled by a surly He and a kindly, harmonium-playing She. New York saw Liliom led not into Heaven but into the backyard of a heaven, wherein a taciturn deity in overalls stood on a ladder and polished stars that he had hung on a clothesline to dry.

The difference between the two scenes was the difference between plodding prose and light lyric poetry.

This, though striking, was but one of many effective alterations made in *Carousel* after its opening in Boston but before its premiere on Broadway. In that period, after the critics of Boston had seen and appraised it but before the New York reviewers sat in judgment, these other important changes were made: the playing time was cut by twenty minutes; a Lana Turner sweater which John Raitt (as Billy Bigelow) had worn and which made him look like the captain of the *Bloomer Girls'* ball team instead of the tough carnival barker, was eliminated and he was given a man's garment to wear; three or four brief but helpful explanatory scenes were inserted in Act One which not only made that act more effective but prepared the way, dramatically, for Act Two; the "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" sequence had a new ballet added, a beautiful, rousing thing; a dance was added to the clambake scene and the ballet in which Bambi Lynn danced out the story of Billy Bigelow's daughter was lengthened and clarified notably. And while all these changes were being made, the acting performances of most of the troupe were being revised and improved.

That was a routine job of tryout alteration and I assure you, as a witness who saw most of the changes made, the quality of *Carousel* was greatly altered and for the better as a result of those changes.

People sometimes say—even people of the theatre—that the really good plays aren't changed much in tryout. That isn't so. William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life,* which was good enough to win both the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Prize, was ripped to pieces, rewritten, partly recast, restaged and even furnished with a brand new setting in the three and one-half weeks between its premiere performance in Princeton, New Jersey, and its whooping introduction to fevered Broadway.

It began its career in Princeton as a symbolical drama of a mys-

terious tippling stranger in a mysterious and artfully symbolical San Francisco waterfront saloon. It proceeded to New Haven where its director resigned and was superseded by Eddie Dowling and Saroyan himself, who had been summoned hastily from California. It was re-staged to eliminate all symbolism. It was removed to Boston for a two-week engagement and there five public stenographers pounded their typewriters feverishly to keep up with the furious rewriting of Mr. Saroyan who had put the entire first draft on paper in six days in a New York hotel room and was able to come up with a new one here.

While all this went on, performances which had been stridently off key were corrected, or their actors liquidated and replaced; simultaneously in New York, for New York, a brand new setting, a barroom which looked like a barroom, was being hastily fabricated. It was finished in time for the Broadway opening.

The first performance—the "world premiere"—of *The Time of Your Life* in Princeton, must have been bewildering. The first in New Haven, a few days later, puzzled even Saroyan who inquired quietly after seeing it: "Whose play is *this*?" The first in Boston was still far from perfect, to the point where some Theatre Guild subscribers resigned in indignation.

Ten days after the Boston first night, some of the newly written scenes had already been inserted and the entire play was throbbing with dramatic excitement. Between then and the Manhattan opening, further changes in text, performance, and direction were made and the new barroom was set up. Where Princeton had been baffled, New Haven puzzled and Boston uncertain as to the quality of this unusual play, New York was ravished.

What New York saw was a highly imaginative, adroitly staged, well-acted drama, presented in a suitable setting. What the other three cities had seen was three other plays with the same title.

Tryout is the first stage in the life of the modern American play, during which its errors are discovered and if possible eliminated by rewriting of the text, re-staging of scenes which fail to come properly to life, elimination of actors who are not suitable and substitution of others. In that period of preparation a play is frequently changed from a more or less imperfect production to something much better. Sometimes, of course, this is impossible.

When the work of the tryout has been well done, the new play is submitted then, in all its shining splendor, to that Manhattan high court from which there is no appeal, and is immediately ac-

cepted as a hit. The critics rush to their typewriters, acclaim it as something that must be seen and the next morning there is a line six miles long at the ticket windows. Movie companies begin bidding frantically for the right to pay a fortune to make a movie that will resemble the play only remotely and the actors are hired away to Hollywood, or at least invited to cocktail parties by people who hadn't spoken to them for two or three years.

The actors are almost invariably keyed up to a high state of tension at a Broadway first night and there may be some slight lapse from perfect acting at the second performance because of the nervous reaction. On the other hand, the second night draws its quota of critics, too, representatives of publications whose deadline is more distant. These men, many of them, exercise some influence, however. The performance of the second night will usually be good.

Indeed, in the case of a play which has any real merit, or any real substance, and which consequently offers its players some sort of challenge, the performances may remain at a high level for many weeks, perhaps months.

The factors which make for deterioration in performance during the latter stages of the New York engagement and subsequently when the play is sent on the road are these: first of all, the director, who is usually more responsible than any one person for the success of the piece, is dismissed at the beginning of the New York engagement. In the second place, the actors usually become bored after a while at saying the same lines over and over again.

If the director were at hand throughout the run of a play, or even required to appear once a week, he would notice at once if a player's performance began to change from good to merely perfunctory. If an entire troupe of actors, out of boredom, began to take liberties with the drama, to make jokes on-stage, perhaps to turn a comedy into a farce or a farce into a pale shadow of itself, he would see and check the trend before any serious damage had been done.

Few plays, however, have a director available after the first New York week. Instead, the stage manager is appointed as a policeman and it is his job to watch for and prevent the kind of malfeasance of which I have spoken. Unfortunately, the stage manager has other duties to perform. Furthermore, even when he is thoroughly conscientious and capable, constant repetition will wear him down, too. He will have heard the play so often, after

a few months, that although he will be able to detect at once any violations of the text, he may well be unable to notice an actor's gradual and perhaps unconscious slowing down or decline.

Light comedies run down quickest and are first to lose the qualities of alertness and high spirits which will make them acceptable at a Broadway opening, but any play can fall away from first night perfection.

When Oscar Serlin organized a special company of *Life With Father* to present that fine comedy in Boston, he and his associates chose fine actors headed by Louis Calhern and Dorothy Gish. During the twenty-two weeks of the Boston engagement, Mr. Serlin visited that company four times. Each time he found scenes wherein the acting had lost its savor or its point; and each time it was necessary to call a rehearsal to restore the play to its pristine perfection.

There are other managers beside Mr. Serlin who police their own plays carefully in New York and on the road. There are, too, a handful of stars who guard the productions in which they appear against variations voluntary or involuntary. I have never seen or heard of a play which starred Miss Hayes which had been blurred or dulled by repetition; and her own performance in *Harriet* mellowed and improved after months of playing. Similarly, the productions of Miss Cornell are watched with jealous care by the star herself. Similarly, her performance of a given role often becomes better as she plays it. She was far better in *No Time for Comedy* seven months *after* the Broadway premiere than she was on that all-important evening, in the opinion of such a reputable observer as S. N. Behrman. Miss Cornell is, of course, an actor-manager; moreover, her director is her producer and her husband, too. Cornell productions are never left to the care of a stage manager at any period of their life.

Acting performances run down most, and most quickly, in light comedy or farce. A comedy which depends for its effect on funny lines amuses its actors in rehearsals, sometimes. The perfecting of his own part may keep an actor alert and fresh in the tryout towns; the awful fear of a bad notice will key him to a high pitch of effort at the New York opening. After that, he may well try to keep his acting up to a high level out of a sense of duty, but sooner or later he is apt to find that the jokes will begin to pall and, presently, it may well be that he begins to speak them mechanically.

In an interview in the *New York Herald Tribune,* not long ago, Actor John Lund told of playing month after month in *Early To Bed,* a musical comedy. He reported that after a while he found he was playing and speaking the lines automatically while his mind dwelt on other things, such as a letter he had to write and so on. One night, an understudy went on for another actor. Lund declares he played opposite the substitute for a matter of some minutes before he suddenly became aware that this *was* an understudy and not the usual player of the role. "Where did *you* come from?" he blurted out.

Even in plays of some substance, where the actor faces something like a challenge to his skill each time he walks on the stage, the effect of repetition can become deadening and worse. Ruth Gordon said that in the last few weeks of her engagement in *A Doll's House,* the monotony began to weigh on her to the point where she had lapses of memory on stage, scenes in which she struggled to recall lines or even the names of characters.

Miss Gordon's skill and integrity are equally great. Some other players are not only less skillful but also less conscientious. When boredom sets in, they go through the motions of acting; or they may even play pranks. Miss Gordon closed *A Doll's House* because she felt unable to keep on doing it properly. Not every actor asks for a release when his part begins to pall on him, perhaps because he needs the money; perhaps because he doesn't care.

In any case, the net result of this falling away from the freshness and perfection of the New York first night is an apparent change in the quality of the play itself. I saw *Of Mice and Men* many months after its first night. At that point, it had degenerated into a dirty joke, three acts long. Apparently the actors had discovered that if they bore down a little on lines that contained strong language, the audiences would snicker, and if they emphasized the profanity just a little more, they might even get loud, if unpleasant, laughter. So they began to vie with one another in an unsavory competition, in the midst of which the underlying strong values of the drama were buried deep. *Of Mice and Men,* so played, was a far less worthy work than it had been originally, when played as its director ordered. Critics and others, seeing it at the New York first night might well accept it as rousing, if imperfect, and deeply moving in certain scenes. Critics who saw it when it had fallen away to an ugly caricature of itself, were rightly inclined to consider it an offensive and depressing thing.

I saw *The Philadelphia Story* at two of the three stages of its career. In the Boston tryout, Miss Hepburn played the role of the snooty Mainliner with a nice feeling for the comedy lines and a serious effort, at least, to bring out the warmth and strong emotion in those sequences wherein the girl is told by the three men that she is, shall we say, spiritually frigid.

By the time of the New York premiere, apparently, she had mastered the character up to the point where she was not only up to the comic scenes but was rather fetching, too, when the men in her life suddenly pricked her icy self-assurance with their accusations.

Two years later, perhaps because the playwright's jokes had come to seem dull by then, she had taken to kicking the character around a little. She laughed or grinned throughout the evening. At one point, instead of walking up to Van Heflin, she slid the final step. When the three men made their charges, she grinned. Most of the time, she shouted. As a result the play, which was originally a comedy, seemed now to be a farce and a bewildering one. Laymen and critics, seeing it for the first time, were perplexed. The jokes were funny enough, but what did it all mean? What did these men mean when they accused this girl of being aloof, ice-cold, emotionally selfish, or snobbish? The woman they saw on the stage capered like a mountain goat and grinned like a Cheshire cat. For all its funny lines, the play didn't make sense.

All this change, this alteration of the play in tryout and the subsequent deterioration which, as I have said, may occur sometimes after the excitement of the New York premiere, creates for the critic of the drama a special problem which neither the art critic nor the literary critic faces, and which even the music critic faces in only a minor way.

In the other arts, the critic considers and evaluates a work which has been fixed and frozen in final form before it is submitted to him, whether he practices in Boston, New York, or Dallas.

A drawing by Rouault would be the same in its frame in San Francisco, let us say, as it was in New York or will be at some future date, in Boston. The San Francisco critic examines it, shudders, walks, runs, or stumbles to his typewriter, to write whatever he thinks. The critic in Boston, when the work shall have arrived there months later, examines it, frowns, walks bravely to a retiring room to regain his composure, then goes to his typewriter, too. The two critics may disagree in their estimate of the picture, but

what they are contemplating or appraising is, in any case, the same identical thing.

When a new novel is published, it is submitted to the book critics nationally, in its final form. No publisher has yet seen fit to "try out" a book by submitting it tentatively in Boston to critics and public alike, then altering it in accordance with audience and critical response and finally furnishing another version to New York for approval and appraisal. The critic of Boston and New York and Chicago read the same pages at the same time and although their judgment of a given work may differ, they are at least at variance over the same thing.

It is, of course, true, that the same piece of music may seem to have different value in two different interpretations, but the composition itself will remain unaltered.

The critic of the drama, if he is judging a play that has just begun its career in one of the tryout cities, frequently sees and hears something that is different *in its essential quality,* from what his colleagues of New York will appraise at the Manhattan premiere. And the reviewer of the "road" city, seeing the same drama six months, a year, or two years later, when it has deteriorated, will be seeing something else again.

I have heard it said by people of the theatre that the "essential qualities" of a good play will shine through even a poor performance, in whatever stage or state a play may be. In my experience this is not necessarily true. Perhaps we should all recognize *Hamlet* for what it is, even if it were submitted first in a tryout wherein its author found occasion to eliminate, let us say, a happy ending, and substitute the present one; and to insert, in time for the New York opening, the "oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy. Perhaps—though I have some doubt about it.

On the other hand, in the case of lesser works — and the contemporary theatre is full of *lesser* works than *Hamlet* which sometimes have some dramatic value — the quality of the play will seem to vary greatly when it is well or ill presented. I saw the original New York company give a sharp, swelling, angry performance of Edward Chodorov's *Decision* that was stormily exciting. Three months later, I saw other actors do the same play, speaking the same lines, and following the same direction, and found it not only dull but utterly unconvincing.

Philip Barry wrote an interesting drama called *Bright Star* a few years ago. On the first night of the Boston tryout, it was

rather effectively played. Less than two weeks later, it was presented to the New York jury. The same cast spoke lines which were, this time, very closely akin to those they had spoken in Boston. They followed the same direction and did everything, externally at least, which they had done a few evenings before in the try-out city. Yet the whole play, which had seemed vital and alive before, had somehow ceased to be a play and was now merely a group of actors walking the stage, saying lines. For that one all-important performance, perhaps because the actors had not yet played it enough, *Bright Star* was a failure and it was so adjudged by the critics. Its failure to come alive was recognized from the first by the playwright himself. At the end of Act One, Mr. Barry went home to bed. His play was "finished" then and he knew it.

A critic cannot go home to bed after Act One. He must stay till the end. He must report what he sees and hears and pass judgment on it, hoping that two weeks from now, or six months from now, or a year from now, it will retain the essential qualities which he discovered in it, hoping, that is, that it will still be the same play and not another one under the same title.

He does his best, this critic, and he usually keeps his hopes high. But if he is one of the two or three hundred who practice their profession (or craft, or trade), in the cities beyond New York — ah, wilderness! — he knows that the odds are usually against him. A play in performance is not, he knows, a static thing; yet he must judge it as though it were and he, in his turn, will be judged by *his* critics as though it were.

Weep for him.

NOTES ON ABSTRACT ART IN THE THEATRE

by

WALDEMAR JOHANSEN

Why do abstract painters and sculptors abandon representational material and use strange new geometric forms which bear little, if any, resemblance to shapes ever seen by the eyes of common men? The answer is simple: the abstract artist, preoccupied with design, is not concerned with surface realities. He deliberately avoids a language which says "hill" and "valley," "sun" and "rain," "people," "laughter" and "tears," "home," "love" and "hate." He wishes rather to speak of pure form, curved and angular shapes that can be mathematically verified, such as the line, plane, cube, pyramid, sphere, and cone; the movement of all these in space; and the play upon them of light, shade, and color. Artists experimenting thirty years ago found abstractions in the form of their own environment — in studio furnishings, the café habitat, certain aspects of nature, man, and man's buildings; but soon they turned to pure invention in completely non-objective compositions.

Abstraction, someone has said, represents man's effort to meet the maladjustments of the Twentieth Century. It is a groping toward a new reality that involves the use of all the sciences for the improvement, rather than the destruction, of mankind. Therein lies the motivating drive behind modern experimentation. Abstract art is the organization of color in painting, sculpture, and particularly in architecture. Abstract art is the organization of color, line, plane, space, light and shade, into an intellectual form or an emotional experience for the purpose of increasing the efficiency of present-day life, or of bringing to it a new illumination.

The word "abstract" is both noun and verb and, as such, suggests both fact and fancy. The noun "abstract" means the combination of forms that are mathematical realities. The verb "to abstract" signifies the dismemberment of visual environment and a recombination of it into new and fanciful patterns. The fact and fancy of abstract art show two traditions: the logical (geometric) and the purely intuitional.

Politically, the original abstractionists belonged to the period between the two world wars, although their experiments started at the turn of the century and are still with us today. The first artists were the early Communists in Russia and the ill-fated Democrats in Germany and France. Their art was placed at the service of movements to make a new world — a world which was failing so miserably to achieve stabilization.

Historically, however, abstractionism began with the impressionists. To them, the entire realm of external visual experience had been conquered and the only road for further development was through a re-examination of the material that made up its subject matter. Color had received the serious attention of the scientists, and had been broken into the three primaries and an equal number of secondaries. The painters used these six colors — lemon yellow, magenta red, turquoise blue, chrome green, orange, and violet — to develop in fine juxtaposition an oscillation that represented in painting the sensation we receive when light plays upon the things we see in everyday life.

The scientific breakdown of light was followed by the close examination of form. The irregularity of hills, trees, and natural surfaces, became regular through geometric handling. Distance merged with foreground for a two-dimensional pattern. Paint was combined with other media or replaced by wood, metal, glass, and stone. The artists employed new compositions for the restyling of architectural environments, and objects used in daily life. Artists did not just paint and sculpture but designed homes, buildings, store fronts, interiors, furnishings, utensils, machinery, vehicles of transportation, advertising, and publicity. And they centralized their experiments in the theatre since it could best serve as a laboratory of all the arts.

Much has been written about simplified scenery. The main argument for simplification in stage design lies in the constant theatric need for visual emphasis upon important action. The motion picture creates emphasis by close-ups, trick-shots, and fade-outs. The stage may do this by changes in lighting; but unless the light plot is motivated by natural sources, naturalism no longer results. Emphasis on the action is created effectively by elimination of unnecessary detail and by the strengthening of the characteristic elements.

Another factor which has influenced simplification in stage design is the need for rapid scenery changes. It is impossible to

shift traditional box sets and exteriors quickly unless theatres are equipped with elevators, revolving stages, wagon stages, jackknife stages, and enormous wings and flies, all of which constitute the technical requirements for truly realistic backgrounds. Such equipment is the theatre technician's dream, but the playwright's, director's, and designer's nightmare.

Dramatic scenery should rightfully be only a vignette, just as a play is a vignette. All details not essential to the immediate development of the plot should be omitted. It is more difficult to create a satisfying picture through the elimination of superfluous material and by abstraction than to reproduce an "authentic" setting: but the possibilities of interplay between settings composed of simple forms and actors are infinite. When a stage design is conceived from the point of view of the action and the settings are built around the most important movements of the actors, the artist quickly realizes that it is more important to use steps, ramps, and platforms, than it is to become preoccupied with decorative detail. Unnecessary set and hand props, walls, windows, and doors, must be eliminated.The geometric forms which remain are placed so as to express the action most effectively, and are combined with the elements of abstract art which are, as mentioned previously, line, plane, mass, space, color, texture, pattern, and light and dark.

The line in stage design is not just a one-dimensional movement, for it may describe all three directions — the height, the width, the depth, the plane, the three-dimensional object, and the space. It may be simply, angularly, and flatly traced across the vertical plane of the proscenium arch; or it may be angular, curved, or both, and angrily or joyously bounced up and down, in and out of the space of the stage house. It may be carefully calculated or totally irrational. The line forms the basis for expressive design, and it can be carefully studied in the paintings of the abstractionists.

Color constitutes the next step in the development of simplified, abstract scenery. The impressionists used elementary color to express the oscillation of light in nature. The designer for the stage employs the impressionists' technique in his stippling, spattering, and "scrumbling" of units, flats, and drapery to create mottled surfaces which will react to vari-colored light.

It is helpful to re-examine the painting of the artists of the impressionist period. Color for them is not just the play of light on surface texture, but has a psychological relation and reaction as well. The abstractionists thought of color in the psychological

vein, conceiving the entire realm of color to be something which exists in its own right, free from any necessity to imitate the actual pigmentation of natural objects.

The abstractionists realize, however, that too many brilliant hues are tiring to the eyes. A simple rule, therefore, is to combine grayed monochromes, analagous colors, complementaries, split complementaries, and triads, and to enhance them with an occasional brighter costume. Since color is expressed not only in pigment but in light as well, it is important that colored light receive a serious consideration in the selection of color. It is simpler to consider light and pigment as one unit and to speak of primaries and secondaries as the six fundamentals which can be used at will in full saturation, as tints, or as shades. Subtler grayed values are always used first, and emphasis is achieved with brilliance.

The attention given to texture by the abstractionists can be another source of interesting design. The feeling of the surface should be expressed visually in bold terms. The grain of wood in large patterns, the weave of a textile, the regularity of grass, the roughness of stone, the smoothness of a wall, the delicacy of a wallpaper pattern contrasted with a glimpse of outdoor forms, any of these can be used as a motif. Surface textures, commonly visible only at close range, can be enlarged when the need arises for more emphatic designs.

Picasso, Braque, Matisse, and other abstractionists show many admirable examples of this texture emphasis combined into intricate patterns, designs, composition, or arrangement.

The combination of line and color needs the added use of light and dark to create the finished stage picture. Light is the modulator of the sculptural mass; cross lighting in complementary colors, tinting with the six fundamentals, and motivation from natural or psychological sources, are the three component parts of the light plot.

To summarize: An abstract stage set is a stylized unit based upon masses composed of abstract forms, a few characteristic motives, and simplified color, all lighted to enhance the three-dimensional mass.

SOME EVIDENCE FOR SECULAR THEATRES IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

by

Roger S. Loomis

It has been the almost universal judgment of literary historians that in the Twelfth Century there was no acted drama but the drama of the Church. It dealt only with sacred subjects, even though at times in a somewhat turbulent and irreverent fashion. It was performed within the church, or immediately outside the church (as in the *Jeu d'Adam*), or in the monastic precincts. The only possible exceptions were the Latin comedies collected and edited by the distinguished historian of medieval drama, M. Gustave Cohen, but these were probably intended for recitation or reading by a single person for the entertainment of profane-minded clerics. The Thirteenth Century brought many innovations, introducing farces such as the *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* and *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* comedy such as the *Jeu de la Feuillée,* satiric monolog such as the *Dit de l'Herberie,* operetta such as *Robin et Marion,* and Arthurian scenes in connection with the Round Table festivals held by Robert, Count of Artois, in 1278 and by Edward I of England. But with all this development of secular drama, the authorities agree that there was as yet no reference to theatres. The setting of the dramatic action, when we can discover it, was a *feuillée* (arbor) or a palace hall or a tourneying field. Only when we get to the references of Bishop Grandison in 1348 and 1352 to a *theatrum* in the city of Exeter where a mock order of monks held their revels and a group of artisans put on publicly *"quendam ludum noxium"* aimed at satirizing the leather-dressers, does Sir Edmund Chambers admit the existence of a regular theatre. To be sure, he notes the use of the word *"theatrum"* by Ailred, master of the novices in the Yorkshire abbey of Rievaulx, about 1141, but he remarks "an actual theatre in the twelfth century is hardly thinkable, and with a learned ecclesiastic one can never be sure that he is not drawing his illustrations rather from his knowledge of classical literature than from the real life around him." Thus Chambers dismisses as inconceivable the notion of secular theatres in the Twelfth Century.

Nevertheless, he actually quotes another passage from the year

1161 in which the word *"theatra"* occurs, and several references to *spectacula theatralia* from the same century. And Dr. Laura Loomis and myself have collected several more such references which suggest familiarity with some building known as a theatre and with dramatic impersonations of a highly developed sort and a decidedly profane character.[1] Particularly significant is a description from the early Thirteenth Century of an infernal theatre in which sinners were forced to re-enact their crimes. Accordingly, the question which Chambers dismissed with a negative answer, must be reopened.

First, let us look at a passage in a letter written by St. Bernard, the great abbot of Clairvaux, about 1126. He is contrasting the amusements of the worldly with the *ludus* of the religious life, and describes jongleurs and tumblers, who with their heads down and their feet in the air, contrary to human practice, stand or walk on their hands, and thus fix the gaze of all on themselves. "The religious game has nothing of the childish, nothing of the *theatre,* which excites lust with feminine and lascivious wrigglings and represents wanton acts."

Since Bernard's picture of the tumblers walking on their hands was drawn from contemporary life, it is natural to infer that his reference to the theatre as a place where lascivious movements and gestures were to be seen, was also drawn from knowledge of his own time.

A very significant association of the pleasures of the theatre with dramatic performances occurs in a work attributed, it would seem on good grounds, to the great Hugh of St. Victor who died in 1141. In the second book of *De Bestiis et Aliis Rebus* we find a passage on sirens.[2]

> Thus those who enjoy the pleasures of this world, pomps, and *theatrical* delights [*theatralibus voluptatibus*], corrupted by tragedies and comedies, lulled as it were into a deep sleep, become the prey of the adversaries.

Ailred of Rievaulx is our next witness. In his *Speculum Charitatis,* written in 1141 or 1142, he inveighs against the histrionic manner in which certain singers of the church services perform their parts. I quote Dr. G. G. Coulton's translation:

[1] The Latin text of the excerpts in this article which are not otherwise specifically annotated is to be found in *Speculum* (January 1945), Vol. XX, pp. 92-98.

[2] Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* Vol. CLXXVII, col. 78. Hauréau, in *Les Oeuvres de Hugues de St. Victor,* new ed. (Paris 1886), p. 171, attributes the second book to Hugh of St. Victor.

> His whole body meanwhile is in histrionic agitation; his lips twist and turn, his shoulders play, his fingers bend in response to every changing note . . . Meanwhile the common folk stand in trembling awe; . . . it is not without grinning laughter that they watch the singers' wanton gesticulations, the meretricious alternations and irregularities of the voice, so that you would think they had come together, not to a house of prayer, but to a playhouse [*ad theatrum*].

Here again is the association of the *theatrum* with performances involving expressive, histrionic movements. And Ailred evidently has in mind an audience of lay folk moved to laughter by these performances.

In another passage Ailred refers to those persons, dedicated to the religious life, who still are tormented by memories of *nugae theatricae,* "theatrical follies," who prefer Spanish songs and the frivolous *nugae* of students to the mode of singing instituted by the Holy Spirit. The context here does not define what Ailred meant by *nugae theatricae,* but probably they were the same performances in a theatre to which the earlier passage referred.

To these witnesses from France and England we now add one from Germany. In 1161 Gerhoh von Reichersberg complains that priests are converting their churches into theatres and introducing *spectacula theatralia* into the sacred edifice:

> Those who are called priests are not now dedicated to the service of the church or the altars, but to the exercise of avarice, vanity and spectacles, so that they convert the very churches, the houses of prayer, into *theatres* and fill them with mimetic spectacles of plays. But God and the venerable face of the church abhors *theatrical* spectacles, regards not vanities and false follies, say rather not false but true follies, in which men soften themselves into women as if they were ashamed to be men, clerics transfigure themselves into knights, men into the masks of demons.

Gerhoh returns to the subject in 1169, describing the state of affairs at Augsburg, about 1122 when he was *magister scholae*:

> There is attached to the church itself a monastery noble enough, but altogether devoid of monastic religion, since the brethren neither sleep in the dormitory nor eat in the refectory, except at rare feasts, especially those in which they represent Herod

the persecutor of Christ and the slayer of infants, or by the production of other plays or almost *theatrical* spectacles a contribution was made to a banquet in the refectory, which at almost all other times is empty.

These two passages from Gerhoh, written in the 1160's, display once more familiarity with theatres and with theatrical spectacles. They imply that these spectacles involved mimetic actions, the taking of women's parts by men, and the use of masks.

Miss Meta Harrsen has generously brought to my attention a passage in an Anglo-Norman commentary on the Psalms, composed between 1164 and 1170. The author, referring to the text, *"Multa fecisti tu, domine deus meus, miracula tua,"* writes:[1]

> Here he chides those who were wont to frequent *theatres* in order to see the plays [?] and the marvels, for works of magic were performed there, and they would pay no heed to the church or the service of God. Nevertheless, they can hear there reading and singing of fairer miracles and loftier adventures than they will see in the *theatre* or at the round-dance or at the tourney. For it was a much more glorious thing that S. Peter walked on the sea than that a jongleur walks on a rope, playing an instrument; and yet this seems to them a very great feat. . . But surely the singing in holy church is much fairer, yet it offends them more.

Though the author uses the word *"gius"* of the entertainments at the theatre, and *"gius"* could mean plays (as in the *Jeu d'Adam*), yet he seems to have in mind rather juggling and acrobatic tricks.

Next in chronological order is the famous description by William Fitzstephen of the city of London in his *Life of St. Thomas,* written about 1182. This highly flattering account of the city asserts:

> Instead of *theatrical* spectacles or stage-plays [*spectaculis theatralibus* and *ludis scenicis*] London enjoys more sacred dramas, presenting the miracles which holy confessors performed or the sufferings which the constancy of the martyrs glorified.

[1] The Pierpont Morgan Library, MS. 338, f. 165. *"Ci reprent il ceals ki les theatres soloient hanter, por les gius & por les mervelles veoir, que um i faisoit les encantemenz, & de la glise ne del servise deu ne prenderoient il guarde. & ne porquant de plus beles miracles & de plus hautes aventures poent il la oir lire & canter quil ne verront el theatre, na la carole, ne a behurc. Car mult plus riche chose fu que seins pierres ala a pie sor la meir que ço que uns juggleres va sor une corde notant, & si lor semble co mult grant chose . . . mais certes mult plus belement cante um a seinte eglise, & si lor annie plus."*

This statement implies that one might expect to find in the great city theatrical spectacles or stage plays, but that instead only plays of a strongly contrasted character were presented. Fitzstephen aligns himself with the other witnesses in attesting the profane nature of the *spectacula theatralia.*

Some ten years later the monastic chronicler, Richard of Devizes, seems to contradict flatly the assertion of Fitzstephen. In a very curious letter, graciously brought to my attention by Miss Amy Kelly, purporting to be written by a Jew to a Christian boy whom he had sent to England, the Jew warns specifically against the temptations of London:

> Avoid the bones and the dice, the *theatre* and the tavern. . . Actors, buffoons, sodomites, Africans, flatterers, little boys, pederasts, flute-players, drug-dealers, female diviners, witches, night-walkers, wizards, mimes, beggars, jesters—all this tribe filled the houses.

Doubtless, Richard is exaggerating as much in one direction as Fitzstephen in the other. But the fact remains: he knew, or took it for granted, that there was at least one *theatrum* in London and that it constituted one of the city's many temptations.

The gossipy Giraldus Cambrensis narrates in his autobiography, about 1200, and repeats in the *Speculum Ecclesiae,* about 1216, an amusing experience at the monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury. I quote from the translation of H. E. Butler:

> There was the Prior giving so many dishes to the serving monks, and they in their turn bearing these as gifts to the lower tables; and there were those to whom these gifts were brought, offering their thanks; and all of them gesticulating with fingers, hands and arms, and whistling one to another in lieu of speaking, . . . so that Giraldus seemed to be seated at a stage play [*ludos scenicos*] or among actors and jesters [*histriones et joculatores*].

Surely Giraldus knew from his own experience *ludi scenici,* which were characterized by vivacious gestures, such as were appropriate to actors. Though the word *"theatrum"* does not appear, the *ludi scenici* do not seem to be religious performances and were presumably presented on something like a *scena* or stage.

Perhaps the most extraordinary and illuminating text of all is the one which follows. It forms a part of the *Vision of Thurkill,*

almost certainly composed by Ralph of Coggeshall, who testifies that he took it down from the lips of the visionary, Thurkill, a rustic of Stisted in Essex, a village only four miles from the abbey of Coggeshall, where Ralph became abbot in 1207. The vision itself occurred in 1206, and in the course of it Thurkill was taken on a tour through Hell. A devil informed him that every Saturday night the diabolic hosts were wont to attend *"ludis nostris theatralibus."* I translate the significant passages.[1]

> Behold, on the way down the mountain there was a very spacious building, surrounded by ancient walls, and there were in it many open spaces [*plateae*], filled round about with countless fiery iron seats. The seats were made of burning iron hoops, with nails in every part, above and below, right and left. . . . So great was the multitude of those seats and of the men sitting in them that no tongue would suffice to number them. There were very black walls of iron around the open spaces, and other seats up against the walls, in which the devils sat in a circle as if at a joyous spectacle, mocking the wretched ones and scoffing at their sins. . . While around the circuit the hellish ministers were sitting at the spectacle of mockery, the prince of that evil company spake. . . "Let the Proud Man now be violently dragged from his seat, and let him come into the midst and act before us." The man was snatched by demons, was clad in a black garment, and repeated every gesture of an excessively haughty person before the demons, who responded by laughter. He lifts his shoulders, turns up his countenance, raises his eyes sideways with arched eyebrows, and thunders out commanding and arrogant words. His shoulders play a part, hardly supporting his arms for very disdain. His eyes blaze, his bearing menaces; rising on his toes, he stands with crossed legs, he bends over his breast, then turns his neck backwards, his face burns, with flashing eyes he prophesies wrath, and tapping his nose with his finger, he threatens terrible things. Thus puffed up pride, easily elated, furnished laughter to the monstrous spirits. While he was gloating over his garments and was sewing his sleeves tightly with a needle, suddenly the garments, turning into flames, consumed his

[1] The *Vision of Thurkill* was edited by H. L. D. Ward and its ascription to Ralph of Coggeshall was proved in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* Vol. XXXI (1875), pp. 420-59. The excerpts translated here are from pp. 450-55. A somewhat abridged form of the *Vision* was incorporated by Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris in their chronicles. Passages from the former, describing the infernal theatre, are quoted in *Speculum*, Vol. XX (1945), 94f.

whole body. . . Afterwards a certain knight was brought from his seat, who had spent his life in slaughter and plunder and tournaments. Fully armed as if for battle, he mounted a black horse, which breathed out a pitchy flame, with stench and smoke, from mouth and nostrils, when it was given the spurs, to the torment of its rider. . . When the knight had urged the horse to a gallop and had brandished his spear against the demons who opposed and derided him, repeating his former behavior in combat, he was thrown by them from his steed and torn limb from limb. . .

After this there was brought into the midst a certain man most experienced in law, dragged with great torture from his seat, which he had made for himself over a long time by his evil life and by perverting justice for bribes. . . When he was brought into the *theatrical* sport before the malign spirits and they were applauding him and laughing him to scorn, he was forced to repeat the gestures and the conduct of his past life. For, now turning to the right, now to the left, this way and that, as if he were talking with each party of litigants, now he instructed these as to the case to be proposed, now he equipped those with the answer and the refutation. In the meanwhile his very hands did not cease to move, but now received money from his clients, counted it, and after counting put it away. . . Afterward there was introduced at the festivity of the raging devils an adulterer with an adulteress, who openly before all joined in foul union and repeated their lascivious motions and shameless acts, to their great confusion and amid the reproaches of the demons. . . Plowmen and oxherds, avaricious of gain, were not missing from the wretched assembly. . . Brought into the midst of the monsters, they enact in their presence with plow and oxen their old impudence. . . A miller who stole flour and grain in his mill was present at this sport, and repeated his thefts amid the guffaws of the devils. . . There was present at this sport a merchant with his balances and false weights, and also those persons who stretch new cloth so tightly, both lengthwise and sidewise, that the threads break and a tear appears, and who slily sew together the tears and sell these cloths in dark places.

Ralph of Coggeshall pictures a building containing more than one acting space (*platea*), each surrounded on all sides by tiers of

seats for an audience. The acting consists chiefly of individual performances. The Proud Man and the Lawyer speak; the others, apparently, do not.

M. Gustave Cohen, the authority on medieval French drama, who most kindly consented to comment on most of these quotations in a joint article published in *Speculum* (February 1945), concluded as follows:

> These discoveries of unknown or misunderstood texts invite us to a permanent revision of our theories and a more thorough search through the clerical Latin records and literature from which we have still so much to learn in every branch of medieval studies.

What are the points which emerge from a consideration of these texts?

1. The first quotations from Ailred and Gerhoh, contrasting *theatrum* with *oratorium* and *ecclesia,* strongly suggest that, in England and Germany at least, the *theatrum* was a building, dedicated to very different purposes from those which prevailed in the "house of prayer" and the church. Giraldus Cambrensis, describing the Roman remains at Caerleon on Usk in his *Itinerary,* mentions the *"thermas insignes, templorum reliquias, et loca theatralia,"*— and since the last must include the recently excavated amphitheatre there, there can be no doubt that for Giraldus the word "theatre" meant much the same as for us,—a building provided with a space for acting and tiers of seats for the spectators. Ralph of Coggeshall's account of the "theatrical plays of the Devils" confirms this interpretation, for obviously they were conceived as mimetic performances in a building designed for the purpose.

2. These buildings existed, it would seem, in England and Germany. Though it is hard to believe that the French were less enterprising than their neighbors, the two witnesses from France leave more room for doubt as to whether they knew structures, edifices, devoted to the drama. Indeed, it is a curious fact that French glossaries of the Fourteenth Century translate *theatrum* as *carrefour,* and one adds the alternative meanings of *"lieu commun vel prostibulum."*[1] Whether theatres, in the modern sense, existed in France at this early date remains in doubt.

1 M. Roques, *Recueil Général des Lexiques Français du Moyen Age, Bib. de l'Ec. des Hautes Etudes,* No. 264, pp. 223, 492; No. 269, p. 413. In mss. of John of Garland's *Morale Scolarium,* composed in France, the word *"theatro"* is variously glossed as *colosso* (a mistake for *colosseo*), *publico loco, registro, palatio.* John of Garland, *op. cit.,* ed. L. J. Paetow, p. 233.

3. In one instance, at least, the *theatrum* was conceived as containing several acting spaces (*plateae*), each surrounded by tiers of seats.

4. The performances in these *theatra* were uniformly of a farcical or even licentious character, provoking laughter.

5. Ailred, Giraldus, and Ralph of Coggeshall lay much emphasis on the facial expressions, gestures, and movements of the actors.

These facts seem assured. We must abandon the date 1576 as that of the first post-Roman theatre in England.

On other points there is room for speculation:

1. *Were the actors professionals?* The references in 1348 and 1352 by Bishop Grandison to the performances in the theatre of Exeter specify local non-professional groups, amateurs, as taking part in revels and a *ludum noxium*. But Giraldus couples his references to *ludi scenici* with *histriones et joculatores*; and these were surely professional entertainers. We cannot be certain, but the probabilities are that the performances in the theatre were put on by actors who made a living by their art.

2. *Were the theatres in any instances the old stone amphitheatres left by the Romans?* Monsieur Cohen points out that at Douai and Bourges these antique structures were used in the Middle Ages for the presentation of plays. Professor Mary Marshall calls my attention to the definition of *theatrum* in the *Magnae Derivationes* of Uguccione da Pisa, who died in 1210; this definition, based on Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae,* displays a clear conception of the ancient theatre and amphitheatre. There has recently been uncovered at St. Albans, as Professor Jacob Hammer informs me, a Roman semicircular theatre, and amphitheatres are preserved at Dorchester and Caerleon. Perhaps a similar structure stood at Colchester in Thurkill's day, and it may have supplied the imagery for his vision. It is possible that some of these ancient buildings were in the Twelfth Century still in a satisfactory state for use or were easily adapted, but there is nothing in our texts to prove that this was the case. It remains a conjecture.

3. *What was the nature of the* ludi theatrales, *the* ludi scenici? The word *"ludus,"* of course, does not necessarily mean a play with a plot; often it refers merely to a sport or revel. But Gerhoh, after speaking of the sacred play of Herod and the slaughter of the innocents, goes on to mention *"ludi alii aut spectacula quasi theatralia,"* as if these also involved a group of actors and an incident; and

Fitzstephen contrasts *spectacula theatralia* and *ludi scenici* with plays representing miracles and martyrdoms of the saints, as if the performances were similar except that the former were profane and the latter sacred. Gerhoh and Fitzstephen, therefore, imply that the *spectacula theatralia* and *ludi scenici* were actually plays, probably low farces, with more than one actor and some kind of plot. On the other hand, if there was any verisimilitude in the type of performance given in the infernal theatre described by Ralph of Coggeshall, it consisted of satirical impersonations of one or two characters. That this form of entertainment was popular in the Thirteenth Century is demonstrated by the existence of Ruteboeuf's *Dit de l'Herberie,* a monolog burlesquing a quack herb-doctor and by a passage from a thirteenth-century fabliau. We read that "One minstrel called upon the other to do the office [*mestier*] which he knew. One performed the drunkard; the other the half-wit." In such cases the impersonation would consist not only of mimetic facial expression and bodily action but also of speech. On the basis of this thirteenth-century evidence we may conclude that at least in that period a favorite form of professional entertainment was the impersonation of a single character with dramatic monolog. Still a third form of histrionic art may have been associated with the *theatrum*. It is noticeable that St. Bernard, Ailred, Giraldus, and Ralph of Coggeshall lay great emphasis on the gestures and bodily movements of the actors. Ralph does mention briefly the speeches of the lawyer and the proud man, to be sure, but he seems to regard them as of less importance than the mimetic action, which he describes in detail. Moreover, Giraldus was reminded of the theatre and thought himself among actors when he witnessed the eloquent sign language of the Canterbury monks. All this suggests dumb show or pantomime as a characteristic form of histrionic art. In fact, Alexander Neckam, writing late in the Twelfth Century, speaks of the *histriones* only to mention their facial expressions. He says in one passage: "Does not the actor, now putting on a mournful, now a laughing expression, in order to stir the spectators, even against their will, to laughter, seem to perform the function of a monkey?" Again Neckam says of hypocrites that "they laugh and cry at once, like *histriones* seeking a livelihood by the variety of their gesticulations." It may not be irrelevant to call attention to a passage in the *Tournoi de Chauvency,* composed by Jacques Bretel in 1285. In very modern fashion we are told that the knights wounded in the tourney were provided

with entertainment, quite in the manner of 1945. There was apparently an amateur USO in the Thirteenth Century in the very region round Montmédy where the recent Ardennes offensive took place. We read that "after the wine, the members of the noble company gathered together and inquired who knew how to perform the *béguin,* the hermit, the pilgrim, the Provençal, the *robardel, Bérengier* or the wreath, or any other game to delight and please the wounded." Some of these performances are still mysterious, but the *robardel* is described at length in the *Tournoi* itself. It was a dance engaged in by two courtly ladies, one taking a male, the other a female part. The editor says: *"Ce jeu était une pantomime sans paroles, executée par deux damoiselles travesties, l'une en berger, l'autre en pastoure, et dont le theme était le larcin d'un baiser."* Of course, this dance-pantomime is not recorded till 1285 and the participants were not professional entertainers; but the possibility remains that this somewhat sensual, dramatic dance represents a type known to the Twelfth Century.

Thus from the texts of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries we gather that typical entertainments of the *theatrum* were: 1. secular plays, with a cast of actors and a plot; 2. dramatic monologs, taking off a particular type of character—for instance, the cheating merchant, the shyster lawyer, the boaster; and 3. somewhat risqué pantomimes. Not one of these forms of dramatic or semi-dramatic action is specifically named in association with the theatre of the Twelfth Century, but all three are implied.

I may conclude with the testimony of John Purvey, the author of the second Wyclifite version of the Bible. In a passage from a tract quoted by Miss Deanesly in her *Lollard Bible,* Purvey writes:

> But some say: "I pray thee leave those speeches and tell me a merry tale of Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton, or of Robin Hood. . . Let us live as our fathers did, and then good enough, for they were well loved of *theatres,* wrestlers, buckler-players, of dancers and singers."

Though Purvey wrote between 1382 and 1390 and cannot be accepted as an authority for the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, yet he seems to have been quite right in asserting that Englishmen had been devotees of the theatre long before his day.

THE McCORD THEATRE MUSEUM

by

SARAH CHOKLA GROSS

The McCord Theatre Museum at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, draws the attention of people particularly interested in the history of the theatre of the Southwest, for while its materials cover the whole field of entertainment, the Museum has as its special purpose the collecting and preserving of materials of the region.

Perhaps, however, what may be of greatest interest to those who follow the ways of the theatre and its people is the genesis of the McCord Museum. Ordinarily, the development of a theatre museum and library is a process of patient, educated labor. Most often, the process is one of adding to a nucleus of theatre materials supplied by a private collector. For example, the famous critic and bibliographer, Robert W. Lowe, spent a lifetime building a choice library about the English stage; John Drew acquired this library and presented it to Harvard, and the Harvard Theatre Collection was well on its way. Similarly, the theatre accumulations of a long life on the American stage — promptbooks, letters, playbills, drama library — brought together by an actor-manager, were given to Princeton University and thereupon the William Seymour Theatre Collection formed. It was the presentation of the David Belasco Collection to The New York Public Library in 1931 which brought about the formal establishment of the Theatre Collection as an administrative unit despite the fact that the Library already possessed valuable dramatic material, such as, the Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks and the George Becks Collection of promptbooks.

This, then, is the customary way that theatre collections come into existence, the way of inheritance. But this, however, is not the way that the McCord Museum was started. It had a spontaneous generation. Without endowment, budget, hoard of theatre materials, or specific quarters, the Museum began. There were people interested in bringing it into being, and it was they who gave it life.

It was in 1932, at the low point of the depression, that these

persons got together and the work of organization and the collecting of materials was begun. The collection-to-be was given the name of the McCord Theatre Museum through simple recognition of the guiding spirit of Mary McCord who had been the director of dramatic activities at Southern Methodist University since her work first started there in 1915.

Because the Museum had no home of its own, it was obliged to live, in its several parts, with the students and individual members of the faculty. Up onto the walls of the drama classrooms in Dallas Hall went costume plates, stage designs, photographs, masks — all the interesting and decorative materials that should be exhibited and in daily evidence to students of the theatre, rather than put away on a shelf to be forgotten. The lobby of the modest theatre of the Arden Club, the University's play producing organization, turned into a gallery of theatrical portraits. The books and files of the Museum — the real reference materials of the collection —piled up in the offices of the Public Speaking Department where, like the camel who first asked only to put his head into his master's tent, they soon took more and more room until the members of the teaching staff were crowded into office corners and felt as if the Museum were about to fall on their heads. Luckily, before the archives began to bulge out of the Department's windows, the new Fondren Library was built. When it opened in 1940, the University gave the Museum its present commodious quarters on the top floor of the building.

Here, then, are to be found the materials of the theatre of the Southwest which the Museum's Curator, David Russell, concentrates on collecting. Here may be seen the scrapbooks and programs collected by Eli Sanger, the President of the Museum's Board of Directors, during forty years of playgoing. Here are the Texas playscripts and photographs of the early Texas theatres and managers, with contemporary posters, programs and pictures of players in the Lone Star State. Here, through the co-operation of theatre managers, stage technicians, actors and publicity people, have been gathered the stories of many of the outstanding early theatres (a large percentage of which are no longer in existence), such as those of Galveston, Houston, Austin, Dallas, Sherman, Corsicana, Fort Worth and Columbus. Here are materials on the Mexican Nativity Play, the drama of New Mexico's *Penitentes,* and the history and photographic files of the celebrated Dallas Little Theatre, and of the Curtain Club of the University of Texas.

Here are files not only on the famous Sarah Bernhardt who once played Texas in a tent, but on such home-state Texans as Howard Hughes, Ginger Rogers, King Vidor, Mary Martin, John Lisle Boles, Linda Darnell, Peggy Fears, Mary Brian, Margaret Douglass and Ben Smith. The pictures and data relating to that fabulous flop, *The Ladder,* whose angel, the Texas oil man, Edgar Davis of Luling, kept it alive on Broadway for two years, are gathered here. Odd bits, relating to the medicine shows that until the last two decades still played at night under gas flares, and to repertory tent shows, circuses, horse operas and the like, slowly expand the files.

Turning from the Museum's records of the local and regional theatre to a consideration of its broader holdings, those that reflect the world theatre, and speaking almost at random, one recalls the collection of material on the Russian theatre, the best outside the city of New York; the collection on the Artef theatre; Maria Ascarra's collection of letters, photographs and mementos of her career under David Belasco; the painting by Mei Lan-fang, a gift of the Museum's first adviser, Stark Young, who also presented a stage design in water color by Robert Edmond Jones and a pair of sixteenth-century Italian warrior puppets in tin armor; Chinese plays, brilliantly colored Chinese paper dolls in the costume file and theatre programs, all sent directly from China; two hundred and fifty playscripts of contemporary authors; an extensive clipping file; scrapbooks; thousands of motion picture stills; engravings; color prints; manuscripts; playbills; letters; masks; costumes; stage properties; stage models; theatre programs by the tens of thousands; and the effects of Morris Gest's production of *The Miracle* which "folded up" in Dallas.

One could continue at length in this vein. However, perhaps the most worthy thing to be remembered about the McCord Theatre Museum bears reiteration. The Museum was conceived, organized, developed and cared for by persons who did not ask for, think of, or receive one cent of compensation for their work. They worked with the Museum until its value and importance were recognized and it was given its present comfortable home. Theirs has been a work of love.

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THE DIARY OF BENJAMIN WEBSTER

by

ALAN DOWNER

Among the treasures of the Theatre Collection at Harvard is an old quarto blankbook, bound in crumbling calf. On the inside cover, in a librarian's hand, is inscribed: "Webster, Benjamin, Memorandum book." The entries vary from a series of rather ungrammatical memos in a crabbed youthful scrawl, dating from about 1825, to jottings in the assured illegible hand of the successful theatre manager, about 1850. These entries include anecdotes, a commentary on critics, a criticism of theatrical reporters, a critique of B. Webster, a memo of management, a memo dated 1850, "Tales of the Witches by One *who* watches," a preface to a short story (his own), an entertainment à la Charles Mathews, recollections of conversations with Joseph Cradock, and, of course, the object of our special interest, introduced ungrammatically and briefly as, "Diary — Began January 1st, 1827."

Just why the volume has not been brought to light before this, is a little puzzling. According to Dr. William Van Lennep, Curator of the Theatre Collection, it was acquired by Harvard as part of the large gift of Evert Jansen Wendell in 1918, and, as far as I can make out, it has remained untouched. Its previous history is obscure. Yet, in even a hasty scanning of the pages, great names of the theatre catch the eye: Garrick, Edmund Kean, Fanny Kelly, Mrs. Yates. Benjamin Webster's Diary, like his life and works, has been too much neglected by the historians of the theatre he served so well.

Benjamin Nottingham Webster was born in Bath, England, in 1797, the son of an itinerant dancing master; he died in Kennington in 1882, a successful playwright, a celebrated manager, and an actor who in some roles was considered superior to Squire Bancroft, Beerbohm-Tree, and even Henry Irving. The dramatic instinct for which he became famous is kept alive today by his grandson, Ben Webster, who recently has been playing character roles in Hollywood, and his great-granddaughter, Margaret, who has been teaching Americans to like Shakespeare.

But Benjamin Webster had no thought of founding a theatrical dynasty when he made his first entries in his calf-bound book. He was too busy attempting to establish himself as fit to perform for the (comparatively) sophisticated audiences of Drury Lane, whence he had come in 1820. He had been a struggling provincial comedian (just completing, in fact, an engagement as Harlequin-General Utility-and-Second Fiddle) when he caught the eye of Robert William Elliston, Drury's rococo manager. It was a happy and exciting moment to arrive at the national theatre. Edmund Kean was desperately struggling to maintain his popularity in the face of public scandal and a second and only partially successful trip to America. The memory of Garrick, and Charles Lamb's "Old Actors," was strong in the land. Webster was destined to fulfill a career as manager more brilliant than Elliston, and as actor only less brilliant than the giants: Kemble, Kean, and Macready. At the moment, however, he was being carefully held back in minor roles, playing for example, in the two months covered by the Diary, such parts as Antonio (the Kemble-christened "Gentleman" in *Othello,* Act II, Scene i), and Sir Richard Ratcliffe in *Richard III.*

Since the Drury Lane Green Room bulks large in Webster's Diary, it is perhaps worth pausing over. As far as the professional theatre is concerned, the Green Room has vanished into limbo along with the Carpenter's Scene, Second Grooves, and the Center-Door-Fancy. Here and there it survives as a name — and in the amateur and repertory theatre occasionally as something more— but in its former glory as the very heart of the backstage world, it is no more. The origins of this venerable institution seem to be obscure. It was first mentioned in print in Shadwell's *A True Widow* (acted in 1678) as a place where gentlemen of the town might meet actresses "in a green Room, behind the Scenes." The *New English Dictionary* quotes Cibber's *Love Makes a Man, or the Fop's Fortune* (1700), where the green room is specifically mentioned as the place where Fops might meet "all the Girls and Women-Actresses." Summers joins other authorities in agreeing that the room was so named "because originally painted, or hung, with green,"[1] although (like other authorities) he fails to give any *authority* for so declaring. It is a safe guess, no doubt, but one which is subject to amendment. George Vandenhoff, for instance, in 1860, recorded an old theatrical tradition that the room

[1] Summers, Montague, *Restoration Theatre,* p. 57.

was originally carpeted in green baize.[1] Does this suggest a connection between the room and the green baize carpet that was laid on the stage when a tragedy was to be enacted?

At any rate, from the days of the Dorset Garden Theater, the green room has been a kind of place for social assemblage of actresses (and actors) and the privileged few of the public. Here new plays were first read by their authors to the artists, here actors collected to await their calls, and here prompters drank tea with the company after rehearsal. Throughout the Eighteenth Century, in fact, and during the first years of the Nineteenth, the green room was as important to the theatre as the box office is today. Mrs. Mowatt describes a late one in her *Mimic Life*:

> It was a long, narrow apartment. At one end, sofas, throne-chairs, and other stately seats for stage use, stood crowded together. On either side of the wall, a cushioned bench was secured, the only article of stationary furniture, except the full-length mirror.[2]

This was an American green room in a small theatre. Doubtless, the English examples were more splendid, with many benches and gilded mirrors as suitable backgrounds for the colorful figures who dwelt there.[3]

Such a green room was hearth and home to Benjamin Webster. No word that passed there, about the old actors or his contemporaries, escaped him. He was first and last an actor, even as manager. W. S. Gilbert laughed with everyone else at Webster's carelessly staged melodramas at the Adelphi ("Adelphi guests"—supers—are still a byword in the profession) and his determined clinging to outmoded Old Comedy, depending on character comedians, at the Haymarket; but in each case, Webster was merely asserting his faith in the actor as the *primum mobile* of the theatre. As *Punch* wrote in his obituary:

> He outlived his generation, did this venerable Sage,
> Smiled at "coat-and-trouser" pieces and a milk-and-water Age.
> Who can wonder that an Actor and a leader turned his back
> On a decorated Drama and an Art of *bric-a-brac*?

[1] Vandenhoff, George, *Dramatic reminiscences; or, Actors and actresses in England and America*, p. 48. Also the same author's *An actor's note-book; or, The green-room and stage*, p. 48.

[2] Ritchie, Anna Cora (formerly Mrs. Mowatt), *Mimic life; or, Before and behind the curtain*, p. 80.

[3] In the Nineteenth Century Covent Garden and Drury Lane had not one but two green rooms—one for the principal performers, the other for the rest of the company.

Webster's sixty-day diary here printed for the first time, then, is what one would expect from a young actor making his first acquaintance with the glamourous Green Room of Drury. It is, unfortunately, only an abortive attempt at a diary, covering too short a period of a life devoted to the theatre. What would we not give for a continuation in the days when Webster created the role of Triplet in *Masks and Faces* and surpassed Irving in *The Dead Heart*; or when, as manager, he presented Macready, the Keans, and Charlotte Cushman? Then, however, he was too busy. In 1825, he had the leisure (and judging from the roles he played, plenty of leisure) to note down what he heard.

Webster was a shrewd listener. With the naïveté, enthusiasm, and unself-consciousness of a young Samuel Pepys, he jotted down the theatrical anecdote and green-room gossip of the day. Unlike, however, the familiar diary of Pepys, no clear picture of the author's personality emerges; instead, we are thrust into the heart of one of the great theatres of London of that time and permitted to meet, on not quite equal terms, the stars of the day: Edmund Kean, deprived of his thunderbolts, but very humanly worried about his injured leg and his alcoholic diet; Old Munden, still the great comedian off-stage, but suddenly revealed as a penny-pinching hypocrite; Fanny Kelly, beloved of Elia, the heroine of sentimental melodrama, but with a real concern for the future of her profession and the elevation of the stage above the very plays in which she had made her greatest success. They are all here, as actors have ever been, quarreling, joking, impecunious, full of jealousies, rivalries, and quixotic friendships, in their habits as they lived.

Diary
Began January 1st, 1827

January 1st.

Went to rehearsal. Miss Kelly[1] said she would rather see Juliet played by a raw girl than by a finished actress as it would come nearer her idea of what Juliet ought to be—that she thought the scene where Juliet takes the poison was capable of been [*sic*] made a great deal more of than it had ever yet been—that C. Kemble was not aware till she told him that *"Banished! Romeo banished!"* was not in Shakspeare, but added by Mr. Garrick or somebody

[1] This is Charles Lamb's beloved Fanny Kelly. Although chiefly a melodramatic actress, she was apparently serious about her profession, later founding a dramatic school.

whereby the whole of her grief is made "to hinge" upon that sentence which she thought destroyed the effect—her (Juliet's) grief arising from her considering herself the wife of her cousin's murderer. Cooper[1] shewed us a curious letter and card he had received from Kean[2] wherein he writes partly in Indian "that tho' he was told he would be a king he never believed it till now, as he [had] been chosen the king of the Huron tribe of Indians, which consisted of 300 warriors & 250 squaws (women)." The card had an Indian's tattooed head on one side decorated with a tomahawk & bow & arrow & his kingly cognomen, on the reverse his proper address. The gentleman who brought Kean's letter to Cooper related a curious circumstance that occurred at Montreal in the United States. A gentleman of that place named Holmes who was a passionate admirer of Shakspeare, upon hearing Kean was coming he said, "He only wished to see Kean play some of Shakspeare's characters & then die." When Kean played he went & saw Kean play five nights in the week & after the fifth night he went to bed well & was found dead the next morning. Miss Kelly spoke very highly of Kean. She said her & Kean had been playfellows together & when she heard he was coming was very anxious to see what little Edmund could do. Accordingly she accompanied Mathews[3] & another gentleman to witness his first appearance & she was so delighted she never spoke till it was over. She then observed Mathews & saw by the smile on his face that he was much pleased but he said nothing. The gentleman (a Mr. Hayes I think) said it was very fine. "Fine!" said Miss K. "I think I never saw anything equal to it & such is my feeling upon it that I shall be fearful of seeing him act again lest I lose the opinion I have formed of him." And so she would not see him again till he appeared in *Richard* which confirmed her in her first impression that he was a great creature. She said she went round after his Richard & found Dowton[4] ridiculing Kean's acting in every way possible by saying "This is nature, is it? &c" & he expressed his contempt of Kean's acting this morning, always does & always will. Miss K.

[1] John Cooper (d. 1870), a steady though not outstanding player, had made his debut as Romeo at Drury Lane in 1820.

[2] Edmund Kean made his second trip to America in 1825, after the *Cox* v. *Kean* divorce scandal. He told the Americans that he had been driven from England by a pack of scoundrels, and that he was seeking a shelter for the close of his professional career. Nonetheless, he had to be smuggled out of Boston. The kingly cognomen he acquired from the Hurons in Quebec was Alanieoudet.

[3] Charles Mathews (1776-1835), the great comedian and mimic. His wife was Fanny Kelly's half-sister.

[4] William Dowton had made his debut at Drury Lane in 1796, and was considered the most versatile actor of his time. His quiet, natural style was the very opposite of Kean's, and he was an unrelenting adversary.

said Kean's trickery was as apparent then as ever it was, but the new & sudden bursts of genius carried you completely away. Evening. Liston related some anecdotes relative to how he had teazed Pope about eating and drinking. He once asked Pope in *Fish out of Water*[1] if he should like a boiled pig & Pope was so disgusted at the idea that had it not been on the Stage Liston thought he would have knocked him down. On another occasion he humbug'd Pope by telling him a wine merchant had endeavored to impose on him by asking him 80s a doz. for old Port when he could buy it *new* for half the money but he was not quite such a fool as to be done in that way. So Pope was quite disgusted with his taste. Again he never would buy the nasty French brandy while he could get British. "Why then sir," said Pope, "I suppose you like turpentine." "I have no doubt," said Liston, "it would be very nice with water." Again a gentleman who had travelled a great deal was speaking to Liston in the Haymarket Green Room of the various methods of cooking abroad—on which Pope addressing the gent said, "I have not the honour of knowing you sir but hearing you speak of cooking to my worthy friend Liston whom I respect in private & admire in public, I must inform you you are speaking of these things to a man who has no more taste in the table than a Catabaw Indian." The gent thinking him mad immediately left the room.

January 2nd.

Hughs been at Liverpool a week waiting for Kean I suppose—The *Times* says he is arrived. Duke of York expected to die every moment. Kean arrived in the *Silas Richardson* on Sunday last. He told the New Yorkites after his taking leave that "he had a son in England who in two years he would bring out & make an American citizen of."

January 3rd

Nothing.

January 4th

Ibid.

January 5th.

Duke of York died. Kean drunk in White Hart Yard at Smithson's & people running from various parts to look at him in that

[1] A highly successful farce in two acts by Joseph Lunn, produced at the Haymarket during the summer of 1823; Liston played Sam Savory and Pope, Sir George Courtley.

state. He went into the Kean's Head & introduced himself as Captain Smith & his friend (I suspect ["Cooper" scratched out] a Mr. Lee formerly belonging to the Bath Theatre) as Lieutenant Yankee Doodle. He said he must see he was a Captain by the gold lace on his cap. Hudson, the landlord, tried to get him to bed but it was of no use.

January 6th.

No 12th cake,[1] the house being closed for the death of the D of York.

Tune "*Over the Hills & far away*"

Tenducci was a piper's son
He fell in love when he was young
And all the tunes that he could play
Was Water parted from the *sea*—

(with an Irish brogue as sung by Braham[2] in the Green Room.)

January 7th.

No day—

January 8th.

Mr. Price said Kean's dress as Chief of the Huron tribe of Indians cost 700 guineas & that K. had got a canoe in the ship in which he came over. The consideration on which Kean was made a chief was, he was to act as their ambassador in England & endeavor to obtain of the King of England all the fishing & hunting land which had been taken from [them] by the British for the last 150 years. Kean told us, at Quebec Rosencrantz came up to him & said when Kean was playing Hamlet, "We have no Player King, so we must cut it out." "You had better," said Kean, "cut out Hamlet." "Well," said the mime, "I suppose I must do it," & he accordingly read the parts of Rosencrantz & the Player King but at last it got so bad that they were obliged to give it up & Kean and Mrs. Barnes recited some scenes of Jaffier & Belvidera.[3]

[1] The comedian, Robert Baddley (1733-1794), had bequeathed the interest of £100 to provide the actors of Drury Lane with cake and wine in their Green Room on Twelfth Night.

[2] John Braham (*circa* 1774-1856), tenor and composer. The point of Braham's feeble jest is that Giusto Tenducci, the Italian "sopranist," had eloped in 1766 with a young Irishwoman; the father succeeded in having their marriage annulled in 1775.

[3] The principal characters of Otway's *Venice Preserved.*

Taking leave at one town in America when he had been very hoarse the whole of the Evening, he began by saying in a low tone, "Ladies & Gentlemen, Language may be acquired, feeling never"—when a fellow hollowed out, "Speak louder." "There, ladies & Gentlemen," said Kean pointing to this man, "is a specimen of what I mentioned." Mr. Braham said he had never been lucky in any speculation except the Theatrical one & there he had nothing to complain of. Mr. Price[1] said, he had never lost anything in his life except by dear friends, but had always been very lucky in every speculation; he said in the one year 1815 he cleared £23,800 by opening the New York Theatre but at the end of the year by lending his name to bills for dear friends he was £1600 worse than when he began the year. Miss Kelly observed that last year, in her little way, she had lost £700 — 250 by Chamber's bank, 280 by something else, 180 by a friend—she also asserted, being pressed very hard by Braham & Cooper, that she had only one £100 share in the Lyceum[2] & ple[d]ged her word & honour to its being the truth; that the anxiety she felt about the success of that Theatre was gratitude to Mr. Arnold to whom she owed every thing she had in the world & had it not been for him she should have passed many days in prison, thro' her worthy father & other relations. Speaking of Kean, Miss K. said as long as she was able to be carried out she should always go & see Kean play—Dowton walked out of the room. T. Dibdin[3] & his wife (who was very much troubled with the wind) being on a visit at a farm house; the wind, being very high one night, shook the shutters of the windows very violently & alarmed Mrs. D. so much she endeavoured to wake her husband who was very heavy asleep saying, "D. don't you hear the wind, don't you hear?" "Yes, Yes," said D., "yes my dear, take a glass of peppermint & it will keep it out." Incledon & Emery[4] went once to see the Romantic Abbey at St. Asaphs in Wales when Emery asked, on coming to a stone figure, what saint it was. "St. Peter," said Incledon, "my dear boy"—on coming to another the same question was put, "That my dear boy," said In., "that's St. Paul"—at last they came to one of which

[1] Stephen Price (1782-1840), manager of the Park Theater in New York from 1808 until his death. His management of Drury Lane in 1826-1827 was financially disastrous, but led to contacts which made him the chief importer of English talent to America. Wemyss called him "Star-Giver General to the United States."

[2] The Lyceum, or English Opera House, had recently been rebuilt by Samuel James Arnold (1774-1852), dramatist and manager. His programs were largely devoted to musical comedy and melodrama.

[3] Thomas John Dibdin (1771-1841), actor and dramatist. He was married to Nancy Hilliar.

[4] Charles Incledon (1763-1826), vocalist; John Emery (1777-1822), actor.

only the head and legs were left. "Well," said Emery, "who's that?" "Oh," said Incledon, "that must be St. As-aph himself," alluding to his having no posteriors. Incledon was once quite smitten with Mrs. Davison[1] & used to go into the orchestra when she played —if she smiled on him he was in high spirits but Mrs. D. said he never professed a passion for her. Kean appeared at night—the audience on the rise of the curtain called for Kean & would not suffer any of the first scenes of the play to be done & after two & three efforts, Kean came on; nothing can exceed the shout than [*sic*] welcomed him; it lasted exactly three minutes. He bowed gracefully but there was nothing servile in his manner. The part of Shylock he played, in my opinion, better than I had ever seen him. After the first scene he came into the Green Room & I shook hands with him. The twelfth cake & *punch* left by Baddeley was served out on this occasion after the 4th act, of which we all partook. The first toast on this annual occasion is "The skull of the donor"—the second "The Drury Fund" & the third "The Manager." Kean came in & remarked, he felt so tremulous in the first scene from his reception that he could not recover his self possession through the scene. He was in great spirits.

January 11th.

Kean again wonderfully received. He has got a sore wound in his left heel which occasions him to limp a little off the Stage but not on, but on Price remarking that he was lame, Kean said, "Not when acting." It is occasionally very painful to him & has lessened the calf of the leg & swelled the ankle. The papers remarked the next day that he was imperfect in the text of *Othello;* when the fact was, where Kean kneels in the third act he knelt upon the lame leg & was obliged from pain to lean on Wallack[2] to enable him to rise which made him smile at the idea & caused him to say "Within three months," instead of "Within three days."

One hundred and Fifty-three pounds in the Pit, the greatest I have ever known in that Theatre.

January 15th.

Kean's Richard £630 & upwards first price; the Pit greater than on Thursday last. He appeared very ill & languid—he endeavoured to save himself occasionally but he wanted fire and ac-

[1] Maria Davison (*circa* 1780-1858), originally known as Miss Duncan, was a famous player of such roles as Lady Teazle.

[2] James William Wallack (*circa* 1791-1864), actor, and stage manager of Drury Lane from 1823 to 1832. In the present performance of *Othello,* his role was Iago, leading to the incongruous act which made Kean smile.

tivity throughout. In consequence of near a thousand persons not being able to get in, the play was announced for next Monday instead of *Brutus*.[1] It is said Kean made £8000 by his first visit to America of which Price paid him £5000.

January 16th.

Great house to Liston. Liston, speaking of Sinclair,[2] said he possessed a great deal of shrewd common sense & it was extraordinary how well & clearly he could express himself on any subject unconnected with the Stage; there, his vanity always cause[d] him to founder. Liston said, when Sinclair first came to Covent Garden he was so uncultivated, that John Kemble who considered he possessed good abilities took great pains with him—but many others taking the liberty of teasing Sinclair by continually teaching & correcting him—on one occasion after having be[en] tormented in this manner, J. Kemble happened to come up to Sinclair to correct him about something when Sinclair having lost all patience put him aside with his hand, saying, "Hout awa mon, do ye think I dinna ken how to act as well as you?" J. Kemble turned to Liston saying, "That's a very extraordinary young man"—& went to his seat. Sinclair having got a little howcameyouso when dining with Liston & the Revd Mr. Croly,[3] the author, hearing the latter gent about to descant on the Theatre, stopped him at once by saying, "Hold your tongue sir, you know nothing about it." Sinclair having been taken suddenly ill on one night of *Artaxerxes*,[4] Miss Mathews[5] undertook the part at a short notice & an apology was to be made on that consideration & on it also being her first appearance in male attire. Incledon was appointed to perform the office of apologist. Incledon however had no great love for Sinclair & went on rather out of humour at having to claim the indulgence of an audience for Sinclair. So he began by saying, "I have been a servant of the public during a great many years &

[1] A miserable tragedy patched together by John Howard Payne. At its first production at Drury Lane in 1818, it had the astounding run of fifty-two nights.

[2] John Liston was, on this date, playing his famous role of Baillie Nicol Jarvie in *Rob Roy Macgregor*. He had first appeared at Drury Lane in 1823. John Sinclair (1791-1857) was a Scotch composer and vocalist. He appeared at Covent Garden during Kemble's management.

[3] George Croly (1780-1860) was more of an author than a divine. As drama critic of the *New Times* and author of the tragedy of *Catiline*, he might expect to be allowed to speak freely on the drama.

[4] Opera by Thomas Arne, first produced in 1762.

[5] Sarah Blanche Matthews, born 1794, actress and singer. The Covent Garden Playbill, Jan. 24, 1815, announces that the role of Arbaces in *Artaxerxes* will be sung by "Miss Matthews (who has undertaken the Part on the Account of the Indisposition of Mr. Sinclair)." Sinclair returned to the part on the twenty-seventh of February (Playbills, Harvard Theatre Collection).

never disappointed them & though my physician says I ought not to be out of my bed now I am here to perform my duty &c &c" implying, that though he, as an old man & ill, could attend his business, Mr. S., a young man, could not. However a long story, Incledon came off without saying a word about Miss M. having got quite irritated by his feelings & thereby forgot the main object of his apology. When he came off the Manager said, "You have not said one word about Miss M, you must go on again," so on he went. "Ladies & Gentlemen, I beg your pardon, but I forgot to tell you that *Mr.* Mathews will play *Miss* Sinclair's part (*a great laugh*). I beg your pardon, I mean Miss Mathews will do for Mr. Sinclair — no, I mean will act for him" — (*a loud laugh*) and Incledon came off quite enraged, when up came the manager & said, "Mr. Incledon you have not said a word about the male attire now," so on he went & said, "And Miss Mathews will wear the breeches," and off he came amidst shouts of laughter, highly indignant & hardly knowing what he had said. When Miss M. did come on, instead of a reception a burst of laughter saluted her from the recollection of Incledon's odd speech & her wearing trowsers & not breeches. Incledon was finely roasted for this speech but on Mr. Fawcett[1] who was no favorite of his asked [*sic*] him how he could make such a ridiculous speech, Incledon said, "I tell you what, Mr. Jack Fawcett, it is impossible a general peace can be brought about or anything can go well without you; as for Castlereagh, it's all stuff, you know more about Church King & State than any of them." Fawcett turned on his heel & walked off. Fawcett was at all times rudely absolute on political points. If they were giving any opinion on politics in the Green Room he would turn to them & say, "You know nothing about it, how should you, do hold your tongues"—again Fawcett being out with Mathews & Liston on some great review day or something of the sort when they saw some soldiers behave very ill to a carter about his cart, which occasioned Mathews to give vent to his feelings by saying, "If it had been a lord's carriage it would have been allowed to pass without molestation," on which Fawcett went up to him & said, "You know nothing about it, I that am old enough to be your father tell you so, how should you, do hold your tongue."

January 17th.

Nothing Particular—

[1] John Fawcett (1768-1837), actor and dramatist.

January 18th.

Ibid.

January 22nd.

Auld, the Harlequin, fractured his skull in so violent a manner by a fall in the Pit entrance of the Exeter Theatre that he died the next day. He once played at Drury Lane for a few nights & was the most jemmy jumper[1] & Harlequin I ever saw.

January 25th.

Kean played Sir Giles Overeach[2] in capital style but his leg pained him very much & he was afraid it would be perceived in the front, but it was not. He has placed himself under Carpue who has forbid his drinking brandy but allows him gin, rum, or whiskey, for which he gives this reason—"If we put a man's heart," says Carpue, "into brandy it becomes a mass of worms but if we place it [in] gin, rum, or whiskey, it preserves it whole & sound." Kean told us this & laid Cooper 5 pounds he would not touch a drop of brandy for a twelvemonth. Mr. Lee (Kean's companion) informed us that a Mr. Hackit,[3] a decayed merchant, who had become an actor or rather a mimic & was styled by his brother Yankees, the Mathews of America, *Oh yes!* but who could not sing a note, *Oh no!* was come over to England to collect material for an entertainment, ala Mathews, which he intends to treat the sons of liberty with. Mr. Lee said, it was from this man, when he was a Merchant, that Mathews got the story of Uncle Ben, & another about a German frou [*sic*], which he was in the habit of relating to his friends with [*sic*] at his private parties. Dusty Bob Walbourn took the benefit of the act today.[4] Harley[5] showed me a letter that he received from a fellow of the name of Mercer requesting of him half a sovereign *"if convenient,"* which Harley (who is almost too good in that way) sent, though he did not consider he deserved it. Barnard died this morning.

January 26th.

Mrs. Harlowe[6] remarked, that the first play the Princess Charlotte ever saw was the *Child of Nature*[7] at Weymouth, where Mrs.

[1] Jemmy Jumps is a low comedy character in *The Farmer* by John O'Keeffe.
[2] The principal character in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts.*
[3] James Henry Hackett, the celebrated American comedian and mimic.
[4] That is, was declared a bankrupt.
[5] John Pritt Harley (1786-1858), actor and singer. Perhaps because of his liberality, he died penniless.
[6] Sarah Harlowe (1765-1852). Her name was actually Waldron, her husband managing several country theatres.
[7] A sentimental drama by Elizabeth Inchbald.

H. played the Child of nature, & that the Princess was sent home & put to bed at 8 o'clock & that she sent the next day for the doll with which Mrs. Harlowe played in the character. Mr. Mercer took the benefit of the act today for the second time in Two years and a half—having on the lowest calculation since his first insolvency two hundred a year. It is such *gentlemen* as this that render the profession so degraded in the eyes of the public & through such that honest actors are insulted when looking for lodgings, &c.

January 27th.

First night of the new Opera.[1] Braham remarked he was a naval officer in more ways than one for he just reached to Bedford's middle.

January 29th.

Though the words of the opera did not lead to the music, Cooke led to the Opera on Saturday. Kean in good spirits but his leg exceeding painful. It burst out bleeding & the blood came through stocking and sandal. Kean said when acting he forgot the pain, but in his own room he could not walk across it. Archer considered that a man's conscience lays in his belly. When his digestion was good he cared or thought of nothing but how to enjoy himself but when it was bad, he began to reflect & his conscience was aroused.

January 31st.

Saw the new Opera. An apology made for Miss Stephens[2] which was at first very ungraciously received. I think the Opera[3] only so, so but Miss Kelly's acting is inimitable. She observed in the morning she did not like her part but she felt that there [were] certain situations in the character of Gulnare that she could have made a great deal of. I agree with her but had any other person played her part the Opera would have met with a very different reception.

February 1st.

Kean played Hamlet, in parts, very finely but still suffering very greatly from his leg. Mr. Powell told me that he heard they could not keep Kean from the Fountain &c and that Kean had

[1] Bishop's *Englishmen in India.* Miss Kelly played Sally Scraggs; Miss Stephens, the heroine, Gulnare; Braham, Captain Tancred; and Bedford, Captain Dorrington.

[2] Catherine Stephens (1794-1882), vocalist and actress, who later became Countess of Essex.

[3] "Englishman in India" inserted here but not in Benjamin Webster's own handwriting.

engagements arranged by which he would net £8000 if able to fulfill them—70 guineas a night at Dublin, 70 guineas a night at Edinborough & so on. Mr. Price told a friend of Mr. Powells that Kean's nights alone had paid him back all the losses of the previous part of the season, which were considerable. Miss Kelly suffers dreadfully from hysterical affection & violent spasms & she always seems unhappy. They say she is a disappointed woman as far as regards her private life; for from her genius & talent she looked forward to a good match. They say the Earl of Essex was one her eye fixed on & probably her heart for I have heard her speak most highly of him.

Febuary 2nd.

Naught—"Nothing can come of nothing."

February 5th.

Kean played Brutus very finely. Great House. They were obliged to wait between the 4th & 5th acts for Kean to read the last act he was so imperfect, but how is it possible to retain such inflated stuff as the language of this play which has scarcely one beauty on which the mind would delight to dwell.

February 8th.

Kean played Sir Giles again but I think with very evident signs of weakness & distress. I think nothing can be finer than his performance of this difficult part.

February 11th.

Horn's[1] salary stopped & a threat of an action for writing a song for Madme [*sic*] Vestris called "Valentine's Day" in the new farce of £100 *note*. Kean said, on Thursday, that the different applications for money as loans or donations, since his return from America, would have more than taken all the money he had earned during this engagement. A Clergyman of whom he had not the slightest knowledge wrote to him for thirty pounds. Another wrote for the loan of £15 to set him up in business &c &c. Kean during the great run of *Brutus* gave away in small sums seventy five pounds in one week which on reflection was the first circumstance that induced him to be more cautious in bestowing his bounty.

[1] Charles Edward Horn (1786-1849), vocalist and composer associated with Drury Lane. He had supplied a song for the farce by R. B. Peake produced at Covent Garden, February 7th, 1827. Madame Vestris, the famous actress and manager, was the daughter-in-law of Charles Mathews.

February 13th.

Kean enacted Richard as fine as I ever saw him tho' still so ill from his leg. He began in very low spirits & just before going on for his first scene said, "They must get another Richard." He restored a new line in the fifth act, 4th scene, viz: "What's o'clock?" Norfolk "Near ten my lord." Kean's drink now while acting is gin & water.

February 14th.

Miss Kelly said she should like, with necessary omissions, to see the *King Lear* acted as Shakspeare wrote it for she thought it very absurd to see Cordelia running about after Edgar instead of her father. Speaking of loyalty, Dowton said he had heard people say they would sacrifice every thing they had in the world for their King or they would lay down their lives for him but he candidly confessed he would do neither one nor the other.

February 15th.

Kean has been, since he played, at Brighton, said he heard since he had been there they had killed him again. Kean said he thought his death would be a very good vehicle for imitations. The stage to represent the Green Room & the performers entering one after another & he began by giving us a specimen of what he meant. *Braham*—"I hear Kean is dead; poor little fellow, I should have been glad to have been friends with him till his death had he not committed that sad faux pas & rendered the thing impossible"—*Munden*[1]—"Is the dear boy dead? Where is he? Where is he? that I may kiss his toe." Then one of the company was to address Munden & say the company had thought of making a subscription to have gold nails in his coffin instead of brass ones & should be [happy] to receive his mite towards it. "I'll see him in hell first," hobbling out of the room.

February 26th.

Kean played Richard. An apology was obliged to be made for him by Wallack at the end of the first act. Kean was in very low spirits & cried, a circumstance that I believe never occurred before. He had procured by interest a cadet's place for his son which was agreed to by all parties but however Mrs. Kean sent her son to his

[1] Joseph Shepherd Munden (1758-1832), one of the great comedians of the day. Lamb's portrait of him is unforgettable.

father & induced the boy to speak to his father in very disrespectful terms, refusing to accept the situation & saying his father had given him a good education & he trusted that would be sufficient to carry himself & mother through the world without his assistance & then walked out of the room. This hurt Kean exceedingly. He said he [had] not tasted food for a fortnight but his leg was much better—the very sight of knives & forks was a sickness to him. He was obliged to drink a great deal of brandy & water mixed with jelly & have hartshorn applied to his nose to enable him to keep up at all. He said if anyone had told him some years [ago] that such would have been the case he would not have believed them. I observe he always pronounces his name *Cane*. In the fight he did not fall on his knee as usual & was carried off immediately after his death being so very ill.

February 27th.

Sir Giles. We did not begin till a quarter past seven, Kean being taken with a violent fit of vomiting & vomited a great quantity of blood. He was obliged to be quite nursed to get through the part. Waiting between the acts &c. He said he could not afford to lay by & had no doubt the country air would do him good. At the end of the play he was called for, but I could not hear what he said. He went on [in] his cloak which is lined with racoon skin. He plays in Manchester Thursday next Shylock as that is the easiest.

All the materials in Benjamin N. Webster's memorandum book, besides his diary, which are considered of any theatrical interest by Mr. Downer and Dr. Van Lennep, have been gathered into the following note. Chief among them, at least as far as length is concerned, are the recollections of conversations with the playwright, Joseph Cradock, who lived in intimacy with the great actors of Garrick's circle and whose knowledge of the personalities in the theatre of his time is well known. Here, as well as in the diary, the materials are presented as Webster wrote them, except for the correction of certain mechanical errors, and the addition of certain punctuation for clarity. In the diary, the dates without a recording have been eliminated. EDITOR'S NOTE.

ANECDOTES &c

April 24th, 1825. The other day Theodore Hook & George Colman were discoursing on religion & George Colman observed fear was a very necessary attendant on religion for, says Colman, "Fear begets reverence." "Yes," says Theodore, "Sir reverence,"—at which Saint George took great offence.

When Elliston went to get the Coronation licensed, the licenser observed he thought it was a 'very improper subject to bring on the stage as it would be throwing an indignity on the person of his Majesty. "Oh," replied Elliston, "that's impossible for *I* intend to enact the King"—& by this piece of condescension gained his point.

Elliston was never sober when representing his Majesty in the Pageant of the Coronation but awfully grand and mysterious. He used to walk from one Green room to the other with the six little boys holding his train up untill I verily believe he fancied himself every inch a king. One Evening he condescended to desire these little boys "to go & piddle."

R. B. Peake one morning going into the treasury of The Theatre English Opera inquired of the clerk if any person had been there, observed a *stage screw* lying on his desk, said, "Oh I see Winston has been here & has left his *card*."

[*November*], 1828. John Kemble had a vast deal of sly humour about him & occasionally indulged in it. His gravity of demeanour used to give an air of seriousness to the most ridiculous nonsense. Abbot on first coming to Covent Garden had a part to play where he led on a number of persons to the sound of a trumpet & no trumpet being there Abbot imitated with his voice (very badly) the trumpet. John Kemble being bent [on] a joke said to the persons around, "Really now that's very clever. Will you have the goodness Mr. Abbot to do that again?" Abbot coloured & every body stared. "No now I beseech [you]," said John, "to do it again for it really is quite delightful." Abbot believing Kemble to be serious actually did it again to the great amusement of John & nearly all the company.

Another time for a joke John K. actually made a man alter his name. A Mr. Tibby was engaged at C. G. & J. K. seeing his name in the list of performers & observing it to be [a] very odd name went on the stage & said, "where is Mr. Tibby?" "Here am I sir," said Tibby. "Really Mr. Tibby," said John, "You must alter your name to Triby for if we were to put your name in the bills the good folk would be calling out Puss! Puss!" "Very well sir," was the reply & he lived & died a Triby.

November 29th. A new carpet of a very light character, in compliment I suppose to certain ladies of the D. L. corps dramatique, was laid down on Thursday the 27th in the first Green Room. Opinions passed on its colours were as various as the tints & all present decided that it was caculated [*sic*] to shew the least spot of dirt. Mr. Price observed that that objection was easily overuled [*sic*] as the application of a little gall would clean it. "Oh," said Mrs. Orger, "You need not apply gall. There will be sufficient on it in the course of every day."

MEMO OF MANAGEMENT

February 17th, 1856. My first acquaintance with a Manager was being taken to see Diamond the Manager of Bath Theatre buried in the Abbey Church of that city [he died January 2, 1812]. He was of the old and gentlemanly school who considered acting as an art, who deemed education & accomplishments necessary to the development of character & who could not conceive, as is the fashion now, that gentlemen commoners in the fitful fancy of the moment deemed themselves competent before their guests of executing the studied realisations of nature—as if it did not require as much time to embody the ideas & pictorial effects of genius bodily as to paint similar compositions on canvas. A portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds & Sir Thomas Lawrence is looked at with wonder but an actor's portrait palpably placed before the millions is a passing shadow.

Sir Edwin Landseer told me that Lord Campbell (I think) very shrewdly and & truthfully to my mind clearly showed the true meaning of "Aroint thee witch &c" [*Macbeth*]. In Scot- *soloient hanter, por les gius & por les mervelles veoir, que um i faisoit les encantemenz, &* land he said it was customary to keep a bit of box or *Rowan tree* hung up against witches & evil spirits & that no doubt Shakespere had heard of this practice & meant A *Rowan tree* witch. No such word as aroint can be found in any book or dictionary of that period.

OF CRITICS

Milton reverentially called critics "those good men" who unite with God, in awarding renown to mortals. Mirabile dictu!

Mr. George Vandenhoff concludes his experiences of the Theatrical life with "go to anything or anywhere, that will give him an honest & decent livelihood, [rather] than go upon the stage." He should have added "than be an indifferent exponent of the drama affecting the talents of genius."

Speaking of critics, especially theatrical ones, venality personified, they always remind me when attacking a really clever author, of the famous sign over a French shoemaker's of a Lion or Tiger seizing a boot, with the remark beneath, "He may tear it but he cannot undo the work."

In all great countries the great dramatic writers & founders of dramatic literature have been actors, and yet I hear some bold tribunes & tritons of minows [*sic*] talk of the actor as an automaton to which they give brains & life. Bosh! Tom Taylor talked of being *satisfied* with me as a man, a manager, an actor, & an author. How patronising, especially after I had made two of his collaborated pieces with Charles Read actable, viz: *Masks* & *Faces* and *Two Loves* & *a Life*, which latter the *Punch* fellows called (in private) "Two Loaves & a Knife." As Sir Fretful [Plagiary] says, "damned good natured!"

I wonder if any man has been ever haunted by a name as I have been & that name associated more or less with evil. That name is Charles & almost as fatal to me as to England—from Charles, a treacherous boy I placed confidence in, to Charles Macready, Charles Marshall, Charles Mathews &c, to the unkindest cut of all, Charles Dickens. Jany 30/60-1st night of *A Tale of two Cities* of which I could write a tale.

A pantomimical dresser—Taylor my dresser is a great character but one peculiarity is worth noting. He never speaks while dressing me unless spoken to, perhaps from perceiving my habit of thinking of my character while dressing. Every [thing] is given me in silence or pointed to. Jany 30/60.

Occasional conversations, & recollections of conversations with Joseph Cradock Esq. author of the Tragedies of *Zobeide, The Czar* &c—1825

April 24th. Garrick rendered his life miserable by believing & encour[ag]ing tale-bearers, & feeling hurt in the extreme at every little squib that appeared in the daily prints & novels of the day. Tom King, the actor, & Becket the bookseller, were the persons who brought Garrick every disagreeable paragraph & tittletattle of the day. Becket was a sort of runner for Garrick. I have called on Garrick in the morning & no person could be in higher spirits & when I have repeated my visit about an hour or two after I have found him quite the reverse; depressed by the daily tales &c of the above gentlemen. Garrick would take up a paper & ask me if I knew who wrote such a paragraph—then pointing to something else would say, "Mrs Brooks must have done this & Yates must have told her &c." Both Mrs Garrick and myself have often urged him in the strongest terms not to give away to this foolish feeling, but to no purpose.

Goldsmith by his ridicule of sentimental comedy made Cumberland, Murphy, &c, his enemies. & thereby did himself great injury; but he observed, Lord North patronised the old comedy & in so doing shewed his judgement.

Lord North was a great advocate for the old comedy & said the complaints of their being too warmly written was a false delicacy. As a proof that he meant what he said, he bespoke *The Old Batchelor* in which Yates performed Fondlewife in the broadest style & his Lordship and family were seated in the front of the boxes. Yates when he performed Fondlewife, at this line, "And she'll take her separate maintenance along with her," used to point to a certain part of Mrs Abingdon's person with his stick which always disconcerted her. Mrs. Yates told her husband she would have knocked him down had he served *her* so.

Miss Brent (the pupil of Dr. Arne) was an amazing fine singer—Catalani is the only one that comes near her—& yet she was no musician; for Dr. Arne kept her in ignorance that she might not be able to leave him. He always accompanied her on the piano when she played & nursed her through every part—Pinto the violin player married her & they went to Ireland w[h]ere Mrs. P. learned to drink & on their return they were so distressed at Coventry as to be obliged to take a benefit at the Inn to enable them to get up to London. Miss Pinto came to Leicester & resided some time at my house. I bespoke a play for her at the Theatre & lighted it with wax at my own expense. *The Beggers Opera* was the piece in which Miss Pinto played Polly. I got Mr. Greatorex to teach her the music, my wife dressed her, Miss Greatorex presided at the piano & Mr. Greatorex led the band. In consequence of this, she was engaged at the Ancient concerts & accordingly came up to London & took lodgings in Islington. Mr. Greatorex told me he often called at her apartments but was told she was out. At length the morning arrived when she was to be heard but on her non-appearance, Mr. Greatorex sent to me, begged I would hasten to her lodging & bring her to the rooms; I accordingly took a coach & drove there as fast as possible. The landlady refused to let me up to her room but I said it was a matter of great importance for I had recommended her to Mr. Greatorex & if she was in the house I would see her. The landlady then told me it was of no avail for she had gone off with Saunders the wire dancer. I afterwards heard her sing at Sadlers wells but she was very much fallen off; she had taken to drink, seemed to be half tipsy then & much bloated. Since then I saw her at one of the fairs near London, grown a fat vulgar looking woman. Miss Brent was very plain & Pinto no doubt married her with the idea of making money by her.

Mr. Pope's first wife was a very sensible woman but not handsome. Pope was a bad husband & I rather think admired his second wife before his first was dead. Mr. Pope's second wife was the beautiful widow [Campion]. She was the most affected lady I ever saw. I sat in a box with her & Pope one night & first she would have the door open, then shut, then her fan, then her smelling bottle, that in fact Pope was more like an upper servant than anything else. Her acting was far from good in my opinion though much esteemed by the town; she was now as if she was fainting & in a moment giving way to violence of passion which was highly applauded—I think had she been under Garrick she would have been one of the greatest actresses the Drama ever produced. It was the fashion at that time to wear very long & large kersemere dresses ornamented with gold & Mrs Pope the second would play Juliet in such a dress in opposition to her friends' advice, at which dress the audience testified their disapprobation for she had to kick it along with her it was so long.

Mrs Arne having been speaking of herself & maid bathing in the Thames, & being rather loose in her orthography and pronounciation, Mr Foote being asked for a song after dinner produced the following—

Mistress Arne Mistress Arne
It *doath* us *concarn*
That of late you're become such a prim Ma'am
As to bathe in the Thames
Which your friends all *condemns*
When they all know *as how* you can't swim Ma'am
But as for your Maid
She's an *impident* jade
Though she swims like a cork we are told Ma'am
In the Thames *for to go*
Her—self *for to show*
Unless she's a mind to catch cold Ma'am

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOX SET

by

JOHN H. McDOWELL

Technical designs indicate that the development of the modern box set, over a period of one hundred and fifty years, was a slow process of transition from traditional to new methods of rigging. It is difficult to set dates on such developments, but an attempt to establish the modern box set goes back, at least, to the last decade of the Eighteenth Century. [1]

From an examination of technical designs, two general conclusions may be drawn which are based upon those materials available under present conditions. First. The early box set did not appear immediately as a new form, but evolved from the traditional eighteenth-century flat wing set. Second. The present concept of the box set, with wings substantially lashed and braced, was the result of practical experimentation with old forms and the application of new ideas of rigging. The development of the box set was principally concerned with the method of rigging.

To bring these statements into pictorial focus, illustrations have been selected to make graphic the traditional eighteenth-century set, the pivoting of flats, the handling of the ceiling piece, the lashing and bracing of wings, and, finally, the asymmetrical set.

Apparently, the first movement toward the establishment of a box set was an attempt to suggest a solid wall. This was accomplished by using the traditional wing set with the wings painted so that they appeared to slant backward. There seems, also, to have been an attempt to represent a solid wall by using flats to plug up the spaces between the wings of the traditional set. The first-mentioned method is represented in Plates One and Two. These plates show actual late eighteenth-century sets which have

[1] An entry in *The Thespian Magazine* (March, 1794), III, p. 127, for an opening at Drury Lane on March 12, 1794 suggests a box set: "The *flies* as the players call those shreds and patches which hang like so many tattered remnants in a shop at Monmouth street, no longer wear that miserable habit, being carved like the fretted roof of an antique pile, and the *wings* to the side scenes, are removed for a complete screen, like those in use at the foreign theatres, thereby perfecting the deception of the scene." The reference to the box set already established abroad, brings attention to Goethe's comment that the French theatre in relinquishing flat wings lost much "by shutting up the sides of the theatre, and forming real room-walls." From *The Auto-Biography of Goethe*, tr. John Oxenford (London, 1848), Pt. III, Book XI, p. 422. Another early reference mentions a "room-piece". (*Stücke Zimmer*) in a list of wings designed by the scene painter. Although this may not indicate a box set, the writer was apparently aware of particular attention being given to the painting of wings for interior scenes. From Adolph Bäuerle, *Wiener Theater-Zeitung* (August 1, 1806), I. No. 5, p. 77.



Plate 1. Late Eighteenth-Century Flat Wing and Border Set for a Farmhouse Interior. Court Theatre, Drottningholm, Sweden. 1766.



Plate 2. Late Eighteenth-Century Flat Wing and Border Set for a Drawing Room. Court Theatre, Gripsholm, Sweden. 1782.

been preserved in the Court Theatres at Drottningholm and Gripsholm, Sweden. [1]

The light and shadows on the floor of Plate One show that this is a wing set with four flat wings at each side. The illusion that each wing slants backward to suggest a solid wall is created by scene painting and lighting. [2] The perspective lines, the painting of three-dimensional objects on the surfaces of flat wings, and the angle of the floor shadows establish the deception. In actuality, the wings are parallel to the proscenium arch. A close examination of the floor line of each wing will indicate that the latter rests on a straight line.

All the properties in the set shown in Plate One, including the balcony, bed, and hearth stove, were painted on the flats. The door in the backdrop, however, was practicable. The ceiling in the engraving of this plate was painted in by the artist as the original ceiling pieces had disappeared. However, the method by which the ceiling was presented may be seen in Plate Two. The light falling on the wings from stage-right was painted on the set. The mirror and table at the center of the backdrop could be interchanged for a door.

The flat borders upon which the ceiling was painted in sections were fixed to battens which could be raised and lowered by means of a drum at the grill above the stage. This fact is important to note for this method of operation later became the beginning device by which the eventual successful operations of the ceiling piece were brought about.

The backdrop or *ferme* shown in Plates One and Two could be raised into the flies by ropes attached to the grill. Sometimes, the *ferme,* as on the English stage, was in two parts that were run in grooves along the floor to meet at stage-center. [3] The usual

1 From Agne Beijer, *Court Theatres of Drottningholm and Gripsholm* (Malmö, 1933). Plates xxx and lx. The Drottningholm Court Theatre was built in the years 1764-1766; the Gripsholm Court Theatre in the years 1781-1782. An account of eighteenth-century staging in these theatres is given by Agne Beijer in Nils G. Wollin, *Desprez en Suède* (Stockholm, 1939), pp. 360-371.

2 The actual slanting of wing units was attempted in the late Seventeenth Century. Andrea Pozzo in his *Perspectiva Pictorum et Architectorum* (Rome, 1693-1700), I, Plates 72 and 73, has projects with four and five units of slanting wings at each side of the stage. As he pointed out, this was to improve the sight lines. Likewise, a later publication by Leonhard Christoph Sturm, *Vollständige Anweisung Grosser Herren Palläste* (Augsburg, 1718), XV, Pl. 22 in his *Der Auserlessneste und . . . verneuerte Goldman . . . oder die Gantze Civil-Bau-Kunst* (Augsburg, 1721) has a project with six units of slanting wings. An interesting late nineteenth-century theatre at East Haddam, Connecticut (1878) has a flat wing set with movable grooves and guides which permit the wings to be turned back on an angle.

3 Technical designs for the operation of the English *ferme* with grooves along the floor and guides above are given in Clément Contant and Joseph de Filippi, *Parallèle des principaux théâtres modernes de l'Europe* (Paris, 1860), II, Pt. II, Plates 27 and 28. An interesting engraving shows a *ferme* in the process of operation with the unit part way on-stage. Frontispiece in Sir Nicholas Nipclose, *The Theatres, A poetical dissection* (London, 1772).

Continental practice, however, was to lower the entire unit below the stage floor.

Plate Three shows the ground-plan of a set with plug or inset flats to fill the spaces between wing set in order to develop a solid wall.[1] Although the inset flats continued in the Nineteenth Century, the method of setting them up remained similar to that shown in Plate Three.[2]

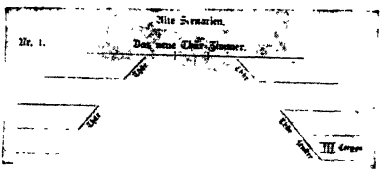


Plate 3. Late Eighteenth-Century Ground-Plan for a Room for August Friedrich Kotzebue's *Der Wirrarr,* Showing the Use of Inset Flats with the Traditional Wing Set.

II

The next step in the attempt to develop a solid wall, which could be handled under conditions that obtain in dramatic performances, is seen in Plates Four and Five. They show the pivoting flat arrangement which provided for the joining of the ends of the flats in such a way that the flats presented a practical, solid wall. In 1723, Giuseppe Bibiena designed a flat wing that swung like the leaf of a book,[3] and in a seventeenth-century manuscript play there is a plan and elevation which has flat wings that turn on an axis.[4] A similar arrangement was adopted in a provincial German theatre built *circa* 1820 with five or six flat wings with each pivoting on a central axis.[5]

The development of this pivoting flat device was bound to the conventional conceptions of eighteenth-century scene changing and

[1] This design was taken from *Das Hauptbuch der Mannheimer Schaubühne . . .* 1797-1816/17, III, No. 1, which is reproduced in Dr. Friedrich Walter, *Archiv und Bibliothek des Grossherzoglichen Hof- und Nationaltheaters in Mannheim* 1779-1839 (Leipzig, 1899), II, 237. For *Der Wirrwarr,* which required a room with five doors, the middle door was set in the *ferme,* while for the four side doors flats were set between the wings. A window flat was inserted down-stage. A variation of this design is found in Mozart's *Don Juan* (*Das Hauptbuch,* I, No. 96, in Walter, II, 234; initial performance at Mannheim on September 27, 1789) which called for a cemetery wall. Flats were inserted between seven sets of wings to form solid walls. Such "Cabinets," as they were called, were found in the storeroom of the Drottningholm Theatre and are reproduced in Beijer, *op. cit.,* Pl. LXIX, 1 and 2. They are set pieces with practicable doors and windows which could be placed between the wings to fill the spaces. Similar insert flats from the *Inventarverzeichnis der Kgl. Schauspielhauses zu Berlin von* 1821 are reproduced in Arno Bosselt, *Das Zimmer auf der Bühne. Die Gestaltung des Innenraumes von der Kulissenbühne der Klassischen Zeit bis zum Naturalismus* (Kiel, 1929). Plates 15-18.

[2] See the ground-plan for Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing,* II, III, from the *Archiv des Hoftheaters zu Meiningen* (October 25, 1868) reproduced in Bosselt, *op. cit.,* Pl. 32, and Delavigne's *Ludwig XI,* IV, from *ibid.* (1869), in Bosselt, *op. cit.,* Pl. 33. Also, see ground-plan for Ambroise Thomas' operatic version of *Hamlet* from *Archiv des Staatstheaters,* Berlin (Kgl. Opernhaus, Berlin, April 14, 1873), reproduced in Bosselt, *op. cit.,* Pl. 22.

[3] Ground-plan for *Costanza e fortezza* (Prague, August 28, 1723) designed by Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena. Engraving by Van der Bruggen and J. H. Martin reproduced in *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich* (Wien, 1910), Bd. 34-35, XVII Jahg., Pl. 3.

[4] *Candy Restored* (1641). Henry E. Huntington Library.

[5] Theatre in Kiefersfelden. Set reproduced in *Die Deutsche Theater-Ausstellung Madgeburg* 1927 (Magdeburg, 1928), Pl. 8.

stage rigging. These methods are worth examining and are, in part at least, the practical devices for scene changing which prevailed in the Court Theatres in Drottningholm and Gripsholm in the late Eighteenth Century.

The ground-plan in Plate Four shows the principles of the pivoting wing used to form a box set.[1] Two flat wings, one on each side of the stage, are indicated by "b." When moved to position "B," the wing's edges move along the dotted lines to form the sides of a solid box set. The backdrop or *ferme,* marked "A," has ends which also pivot to complete the walls of the area. Each wing is attached to an upright beam or pivot which extends through a narrow slot in the stage floor and is secured in a *chariot* or trolley. This *chariot,* represented by "g" in Plate Five, is located immediately below the stage floor. It is mounted on wheels which permit the entire wing unit to be moved on or off stage.[2]

The rigging of the set is in accord with traditional methods in the Continental theatre of that time. It is the basic method of rigging for the sets at the Court Theatres shown in Plates One and Two, even though the wings of those sets were not slanted or pivoted.

The over-all design in Plates Four and Five shows a method of scene changing for a flat wing set with all four *chariots* attached to a single drum below stage.[3] The side wings could be drawn on stage simultaneously, and then quickly pivoted by stagehands. At the same time, the *ferme,* rigged to another drum, marked "D," in Plate Five, could be brought up from below stage through a slot to join the wings, while a ceiling piece could be lowered to enclose the top of the set. Thus, in a matter of seconds, a complete room could be put on the stage with the rigging of an eighteenth-century flat wing set adapted for the purpose.

As mentioned before, the concept of the pivoting wing was not new. Its addition to the flat wing set, however, did something

[1] From Contant and Filippi, *op. cit.,* II, Pt. II, Pl. 6.

[2] From Contant and Filippi, *op. cit.,* II, Pt. II, Pl. 7. Designs with pivoting flats are also in Alphonse Gosset, *Traité de la Construction des Théatres* (Paris, 1886), Plates 35, 39, 40, 41. Detail designs for mounting and pivoting of flat wings are supplied in A. Sturmhoefel, *Scene der Alten und Bühne der Neuzeit* (Berlin, 1889), Pl. 7.

[3] Several studies include technical designs for the traditional *changement à vue,* Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences . . . Recueil de Planches . . .* (Paris, 1772), X, Sec. I, Pl. XIX; Jacques-Auguste Kaufmann, *Architectonographie des Théatres* (Paris, 1840), Plates X, XI, and XII; Jacopo Fabris, *Instruction in der Teatralischen Architectur und Mechanique* (Copenhagen, 1760), 4th book, fol. 7; Gosset, *op. cit.,* Plates 39-40; Contant and Filippi, *op. cit.,* II, Pt. II, Plates 9 and 25; and Gottfried Semper, *Das Koenigliche Hoftheater zu Dresden* (Braunschweig, 1849), Pl. XII.

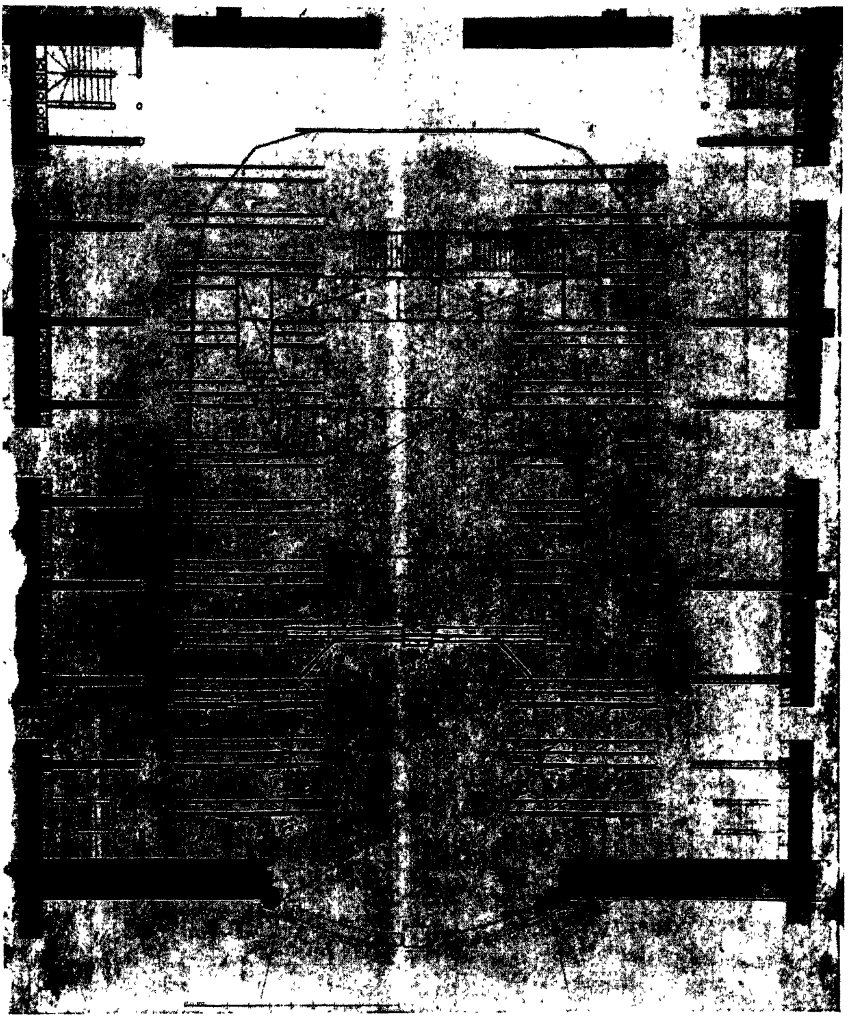


Plate 4. Ground-Plan for a Box Set with Pivoting Wings. Published 1860.
b. Pivoting wings off-stage. B. Pivoting wings on-stage and their line of movement. A. *Ferme* with ends that pivot to meet the side wings. C. Wings to mask the set.
f. Traps. F. Door.

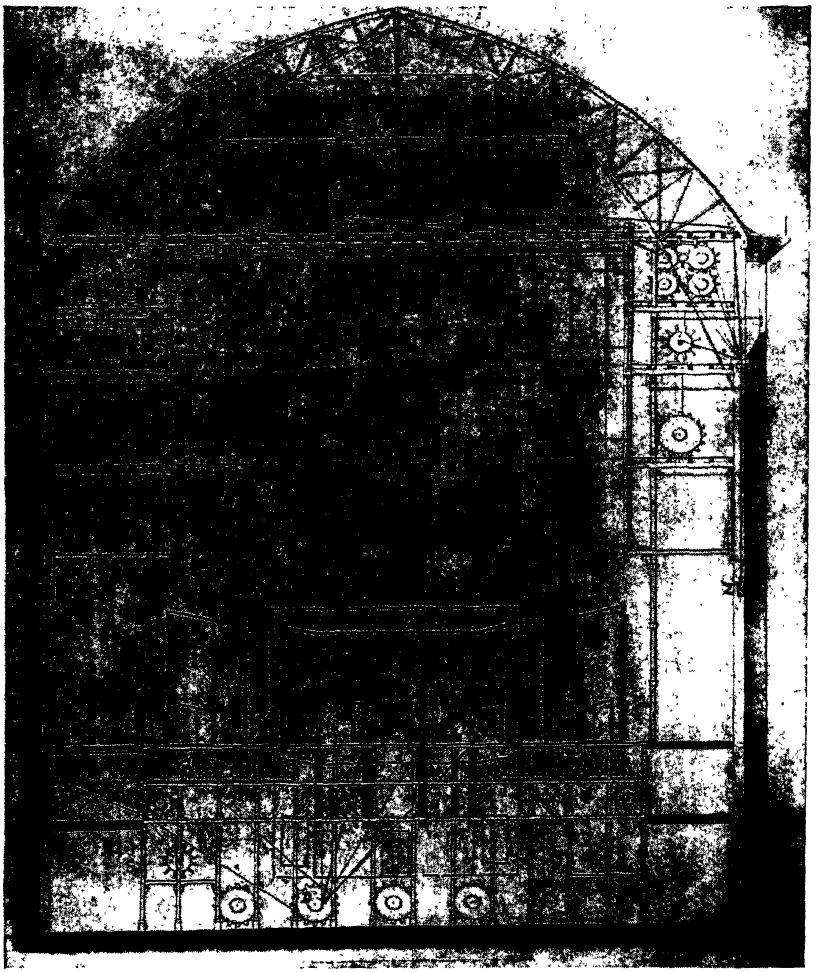


Plate 5. Longitudinal Section for a Box Set with Pivoting Wings. Published 1860.

g. *Chariot,* below stage floor. A. *Ferme* on-stage. a. *Ferme* below stage. B. Ceiling piece. C. Side wings. O. Supports for the *ferme.* N. Grooves for sliding beams supporting the *ferme.* M. Rope to rig *ferme.* D. Drum for *ferme* rigging. r. Suspension ropes for ceiling piece. R. Drum for flying ceiling piece. Z. Counter-weight for flying ceiling piece.

new. It provided the basis of the modern box set which was an innovation in the theatre. At the same time, it preserved the traditional method of scene changing and scene rigging.

III

Perhaps not chronologically, but physically, the next step in the development of the box set was that of the ceiling piece.

Naturally, a ceiling was required to complete the illusion of a real interior. The development of this device, essentially one of method in rigging and handling, found expression in two directions.

One direction is indicated by the Hungarian designer, Institoris. [1] His design shown in Plate Six has a ceiling piece, marked "5," attached to a batten, marked "3," by four hinges indicated by "X," making it possible for the ceiling piece to be flown perpendicularly with the backcloth, marked "2." To indicate the method for joining the ceiling piece with the backcloth, Institoris has supplied a detailed design in Plate Six (see inset). The backcloth batten is marked "3," while the ceiling batten is marked "4." To join them, an iron rod, marked "8," is slipped through two outer parts and the inner part of a hinge, marked respectively "6" and "7."

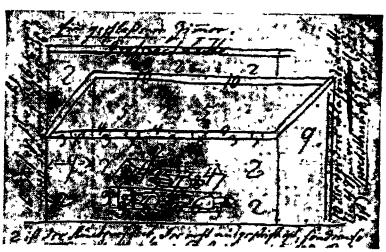


Plate 6. Design for a Box Set with a Hinged Ceiling by Institoris. 1830-1845.

2. Backcloth or *ferme* attached to a batten. 3. Backcloth batten. 4. Ceiling batten at back. 5. Ceiling piece. 6. Outer parts of the hinged joint. 7. Inner part of a hinged joint. 8. Rod to be inserted through 6 and 7 to secure the ceiling piece to the backcloth. 9. Side flats. 10. Ceiling batten at front where four ropes sustained the ceiling piece. X. Four hinged joints.

The other general direction in the evolution of the ceiling piece was probably, as already indicated, an extension and development of the methods in handling the flat borders hung on battens which originally were used to represent the ceiling in the old wing sets as shown in Plates One and Two. Plate Five shows how the ceiling piece, marked "B," was flown and then lowered onto

[1] Institoris, an Hungarian probably from Pressburg, worked from 1830 to 1845. This design for a hinged ceiling, labeled "Ein geschlossend Zimer" (fol. 377 v.) is taken from a section of Institoris' manuscript on stage practice entitled *Zimmer auch Geschlossenes.* Plate Six is reproduced by courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library.

the wings and *ferme*. Plate Seven shows the ceiling piece attached to a batten with ropes that extend to a drum in the grill.[1] A rope at the back of the piece, marked "H" in Plate Seven, was manipulated by hand to tip and guide the piece into position as it was raised and lowered. The two ropes, marked "E" in Plate Seven ("r" in Plate Five), ran through a ring, marked "F," and were attached to the back of the ceiling piece at a point marked "G." The rope marked "E," along with the other ropes attached to the batten in Plate Seven, raised and lowered the ceiling piece.

While the ceiling piece undoubtedly was established at the same time as the other elements comprising the box set, it presented technical problems particularly with reference to lighting. Early attempts to light the box set are of interest.

With the flat wing set, candles and lamps were placed behind the wings and borders to distribute the light over the stage. Enclosures, however, introduced the problem of inadequate illumination, while the ceiling piece added the difficulty of intense heat. Two projects[2] by competent theatrical designers at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century have enclosed stages with no provision for ceilings, which may suggest one solution. Another answer is found in an anonymous drawing[3] with additional light for an interior scene provided by placing the illuminant behind a stove.

With the introduction of gas lighting in the early years of the Nineteenth Century,[4] the problem of lighting the box set was partially solved. For example, a reference in *The Theatrical Observer*[5] points to a ceiling as: " . . . a beautifully painted plafond and lighted by an immense sky-light." While this may refer merely to the innovation of a skylight, the suggestion of unusual visibility is evident, as is also that of an adequate light source.

[1] From Contant and Filippi, *op. cit.*, II, Pt. II, Pl. 8.

[2] See the ground-plan and elevation by Louis Catel, *Vorschläge zur Verbesserung der Schauspielhäuser* (Berlin, 1802), Plates A, B, and E. See Schinkel's designs for the Reformbühne at the Schauspielhaus, Berlin in 1817. Design in Schinkel-Museum, Berlin and reproduced in Franz Benedikt Biermann, "Die Pläne für Reform des Theaterbaues bei Karl Friedrich Schinkel und Gottfried Semper," *Schriften der Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte* (Berlin, 1928), XXXVIII, Pl. 25. Cf. designs and discussion in Bosselt, *op. cit.*

[3] Anonymous drawing, *circa* 1800. Collection of Janos Scholz, New York.

[4] The Lyceum Theatre, London, was lighted by gas in 1803 soon after the invention of the commercial process. At the Olympic, gas replaced candles and lamps in 1815. The next year gas was installed at the Chestnut Street Opera House in Philadelphia. Gas lighting was introduced to the stage and auditorium of Drury Lane in 1817. The Bowery Theatre in New York had gas in 1826. Many theatres, however, did not install gas until after 1850, probably due to the fact that about that time gas lighting came under the control of the prompter.

[5] No. 3791 (February 10, 1834).

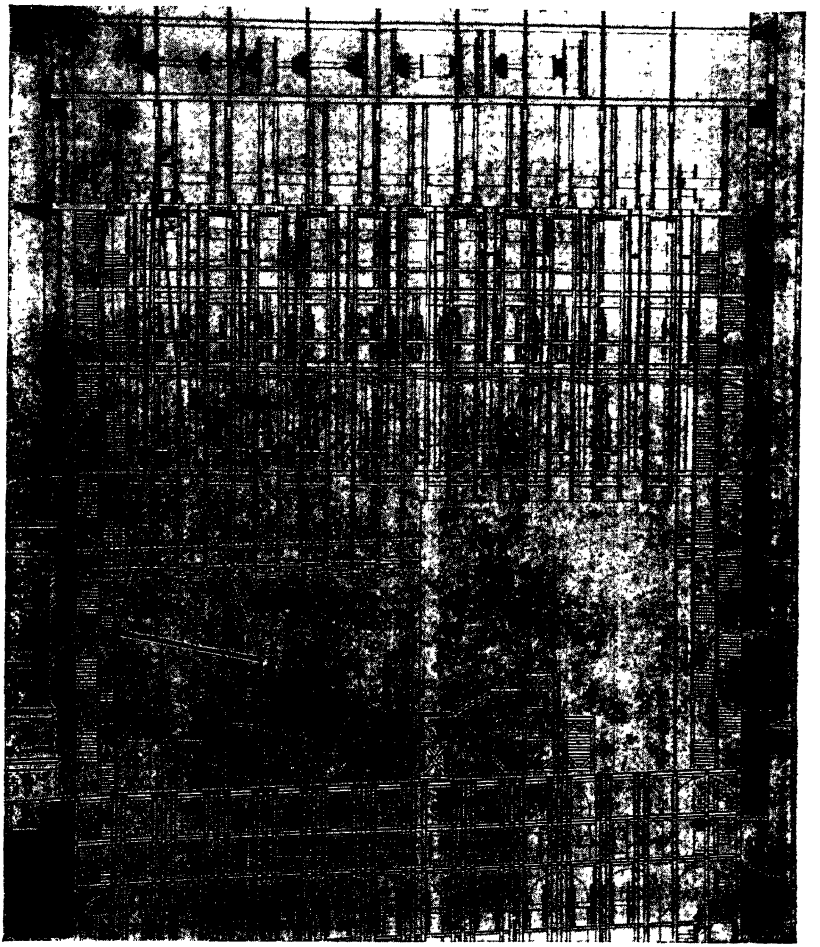


Plate 7. Transverse Section for Ceiling Piece. Published 1860. J. Drum for ceiling. I. Pulleys. E. The forward suspension ropes. F. Eye in the forward batten that allowed for the manipulation of the ceiling piece. G. Place to secure rope on the rear of the ceiling piece. H. Rope to control ceiling piece as it was raised and lowered. A, B, C. Pivoted wings and *ferme*. U. Masking piece in the proscenium opening.

However, not until the introduction of electric lighting[1] was the problem of box-set illumination adequately solved.

IV

Although difficulties with the development and use of the box-set ceiling were connected principally with visibility, they raise the important question of the influence of the rigging of scenery on the early development of the present-day box set. An examination of several technical aspects of this rigging may supply the answer.

Seemingly, the dependence on traditional methods of rigging held the box set within a limited form for a long time, with little or no variation provided beyond that offered by the scene painter. This lack of flexibility was caused by the association of the box set with the accepted system of scene changing. The rapid scene shift or *changement à vue* was essential to a good performance. With the box set built in accordance with the long-established flat wing plan, the requirements for speedy changing were met, and the box set was held to a symmetrical pattern. The persistence of the flat wing system is indicated by the fact that it continued in use alongside the box set for many years, and was sometimes employed for interior scenes as late as 1869.[2]

The independent rigging of the top, sides, and back of the early box set kept it from being thought of as an artistic unit. It was conceived as composed of separate elements which were designed as such, and then joined in a formal pattern. Designers frequently had plans for independent wing and *ferme* pieces.[3]

[1] Shortly after the invention of the incandescent lamp by Thomas A. Edison in 1879, electric lights were introduced to the theatre. In 1880, electric lights appeared at the Paris Opéra and in 1881, at the Savoy, London. In 1882, they appeared at the Brunn Theatre, Austria; the People's Theatre, New York; the Halsted Street Academy of Music, Chicago; the Bijou Theatre, Boston; and the Baldwin Theatre, San Francisco. This same year the Munich Electrotechnical Exposition had a stage with the latest electrical devices.

[2] A pamphlet describing the opening of Booth's Theatre in New York in 1869, refers to the flat wing set in common practice at other theatres. *Booth's Theatre: Behind the Scenes* (New York, 1870), p. 9.

[3] Institoris has many designs for wings in his manuscript. Among them are landscape (p. 247a), thatched roof (pp. 75, 83), barn (pp. 83, 88), fire (p. 171), drapes and statue (p. 86), hut in winter (p. 85), house (p. 87), castle (p. 89), brick (pp. 76, 80), free-standing column (p. 110), temple on rock (p. 109), and tree wings (pp. 115, 116, 118, 223). Several interesting wing designs belong to an Italian architect, Giuseppe Valadier (1762-1839). Two sketches represent the wall of a Gothic hall, while a third indicates an architectural exterior. Designs at Cooper Union, New York.

Independent treatment of the *ferme* is included in several studies. Designs for the *ferme* to come up from below stage are given in J. Moynet, *L'Envers du Théâtre: machines et décorations* (Paris, 1873) Pl. 39, and Georges Moynet, *La Machinerie Théatrale: trucs et décors* (Paris, [1893]), Pl. 29. A design with a *ferme* to come down from the grill is in Semper, *op. cit.*, Pl. XII. Several designs for the construction of the English *ferme* are included in Contant and Filippi, *op. cit.*, II, Pt. II, Plates 40 and 41.

Undoubtedly this was an additional cause for the tardy and obscure development of the early box set. The modern set did not really develop until the traditional methods of rigging were discarded and a new system of lashed and braced flats was introduced. With this, the box set took on a new artistic meaning.

With the development of the present methods of lashing and bracing of flats, the box set was released from the dominance of the flat wing set and from the symmetrical form. The effect of this alteration is described in a pamphlet on Booth's Theatre in 1869:

> The side-wings at this theatre are arranged at oblique instead of at right angles, forming to every side-view as perfect a picture as can be afforded directly in front of the foot-lights. The wings are not run in on grooves, as in other theatres, with slides above to support them, but are held in place by long braces, which we see men busily placing in our first illustration.[1]

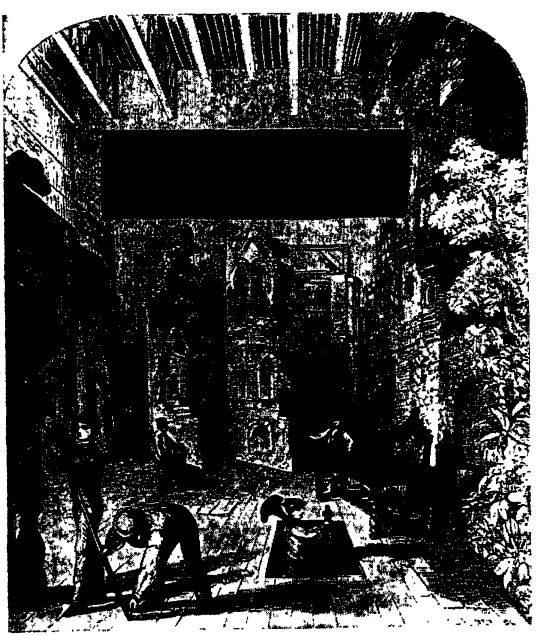


Plate 8. A Stage Brace at Booth's Theatre. New York, 1869.

The picture of the scene described above is presented in Plate Eight.

A short brace with a hook and stage screw was illustrated by Davidge in 1866[2] with this account. "They are called braces, and are used for sustaining the weight of cottages, trees, and set pieces of all kinds." An interesting nineteenth-century print to be seen in Plate Nine suggests a transitional step with both the old and new types of supports. The *ferme*,

[1] *Booth's Theatre, op. cit.*, p. 9.

[2] William Davidge, *Footlight Flashes* (New York, 1866), pp. 150-151.

marked "h," is attached to the upright sustained by a *chariot,* marked "b," while the side wall with a practicable door is secured to the floor by a short brace marked, "i."[1]

For an illustration of early modern lashing, a nineteenth-century engraving shown in Plate Ten demonstrates the method of securing wings to uprights. Near the top of the down-stage wing, the flat is fastened to the upright by cross-lashing, while at the same position on the up-stage wing, a lashing cord hangs from the cross-piece.[2]



Plate 9. Ground-Plan and Elevation for the Theatre de la Société with a Set Combining Traditional Rigging and Elementary Bracing. Published 1886.
h. *Ferme.* b. *Chariot.* i. Short stage brace.

With lashing and bracing, the parts of the enclosure were rendered with greater unity. This direction is illustrated in a nineteenth-century engraving[3] with the back and sides of a room designed as one architectural piece with joints to permit the set to be put on the stage as a room. Unity of this sort permitted greater stress on verisimilitude. The extravagant review of Mme. Vestris' production of *London Assurance* (Covent Garden, 1841) suggests that line of development. *The Theatrical Observer* reported that:

. . . it is impossible adequately to convey an idea of its superlative grandeur . . . the Squire's house, opening on to a green lawn, — the drawing-rooms so magnificently furnished, with the most costly articles of decoration

[1] From Gosset, *op. cit.,* Pl. 62. Reproduced by courtesy of the Avery Library, New York.

[2] From J. Moynet, *op. cit.,* Pl. 41.

[3] Georges Moynet, *op. cit.,* Plates 36 and 39.

—not stage properties, but *bona fide* realties—were such as were never before seen beyond the pale of fashionable life, and could only have been imitated by one used to that society.[1]

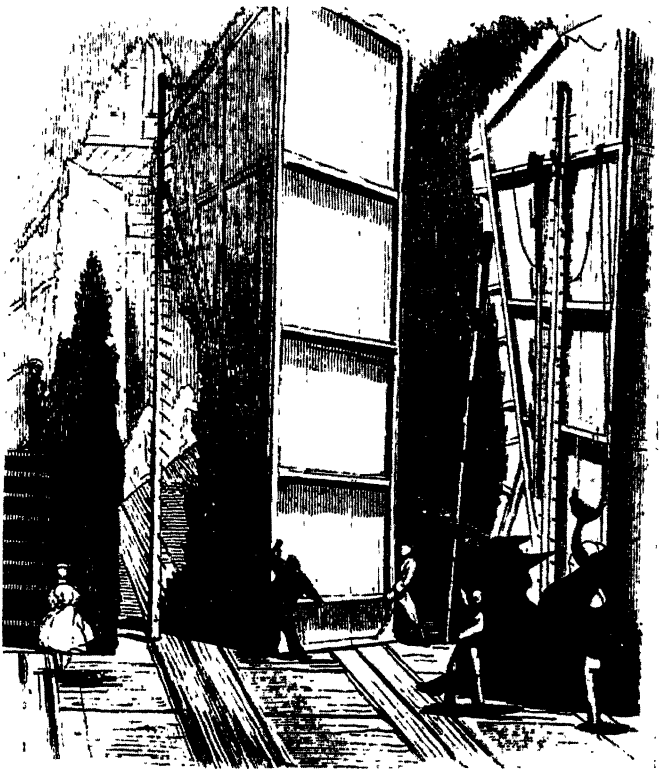


Plate 10. Sketch with Lashings of Wing Flats. Published 1873.

The interiors for *The Minister and the Mercer* (Drury Lane, 1834) are described in the playbill as:

> A Splendid Apartment in the Palace of Christianbourg (designed and executed by Mr. Stanfield, on a Scale of Extent, Novelty and Grandeur, introduced for the First Time on the Stage.) Interior of Raton Burken-Staff's Shop. Apartment in the House of Lord Falkensteid.[2]

[1] No. 5992 (Saturday, March 6, 1841).

[2] Playbill (Saturday, February 8, 1834). An interesting advertisement in the Playbill for Friday, January 31, 1834 reads: "Owing to the extensive nature of the Scenery and Machinery in the New Drama, it has been found necessary to postpone it until the ensuing week . . . "

Another interior in the same house also suggests possibilities for realistic detail. Superlatives to describe Charles Kean's authentic staging of Shakespeare may be verified in the set for the Hall of Blackfriars for *Henry VIII* (Princess Theatre, 1855)[1] shown in Plate Eleven. Mention, too, should be made of the



Plate 11. Design of an Early Box Set. A Hall in Blackfriars for Charles Kean's production of *Henry VIII*, Act II, sc. iv. Princess Theatre, London, 1855.

Bancrofts' realistic productions for Robertson's plays in the 1860's.[2]

Edward W. Mammen in his study of the Boston Museum writes that "The Boston Museum proudly offered its first box-set in November 24, 1862."[3] In a note he quotes the program for that occasion which says that "This scene, unlike the usual stage interior, is in reality a perfect enclosure with ceiling and entablatures, supported by caryatides."[4]

At Booth's Theatre in 1869, the enclosed room was referred to as an innovation, and was described as follows:

> The visitor at Booth's has doubtless noted that the stage is not dressed after the old style. The side-wings, that in

[1] Reproduced by courtesy of the Yale-Rockefeller Theatrical Collection, New Haven, Connecticut.
[2] Ernest Bradlee Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 402-425.
[3] Edward William Mammen, *The Old Stock Company School of Acting* (Boston, Mass., 1945), p. 30.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 74. note 50.



Plate 12. Sketch for the First Box Set on the New York Stage. The Queen's Closet for Booth's Production of *Hamlet*, Act III, sc. iii. Design by Charles W. Witham. Booth's Theatre, New York, 1869.

other theatres stand at right angles to the spectator, are abolished, and instead there is an arrangement by which the scene apparently extends to the right and to the left, as well as to the rear. When seated at the side of the theatre, you do not look between the wings, but your vision is confronted, if the scene is a room, by enclosed walls.[1]

For the appearance of a box set for Booth's production of *Hamlet* in December 1869, Charles W. Witham has an ornate water color of the Queen's Closet to be seen in Plate Twelve.[2] Undoubtedly this is a picture of the first box set on the New York stage.

V

The reference to the fact that the set for the Closet scene in 1869 "apparently extends to the right and to the left, as well as to the rear," undoubtedly points to the break with the usual symmetrical form imposed by the flat wing set. With the bracing of wings, the box set could be regarded as an artistic unit with the possibility of an irregular ground-plan.

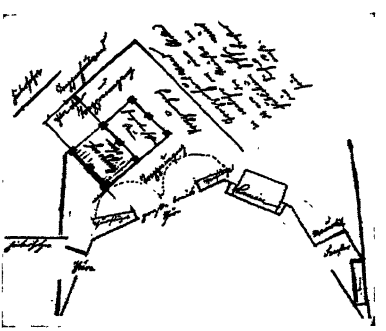


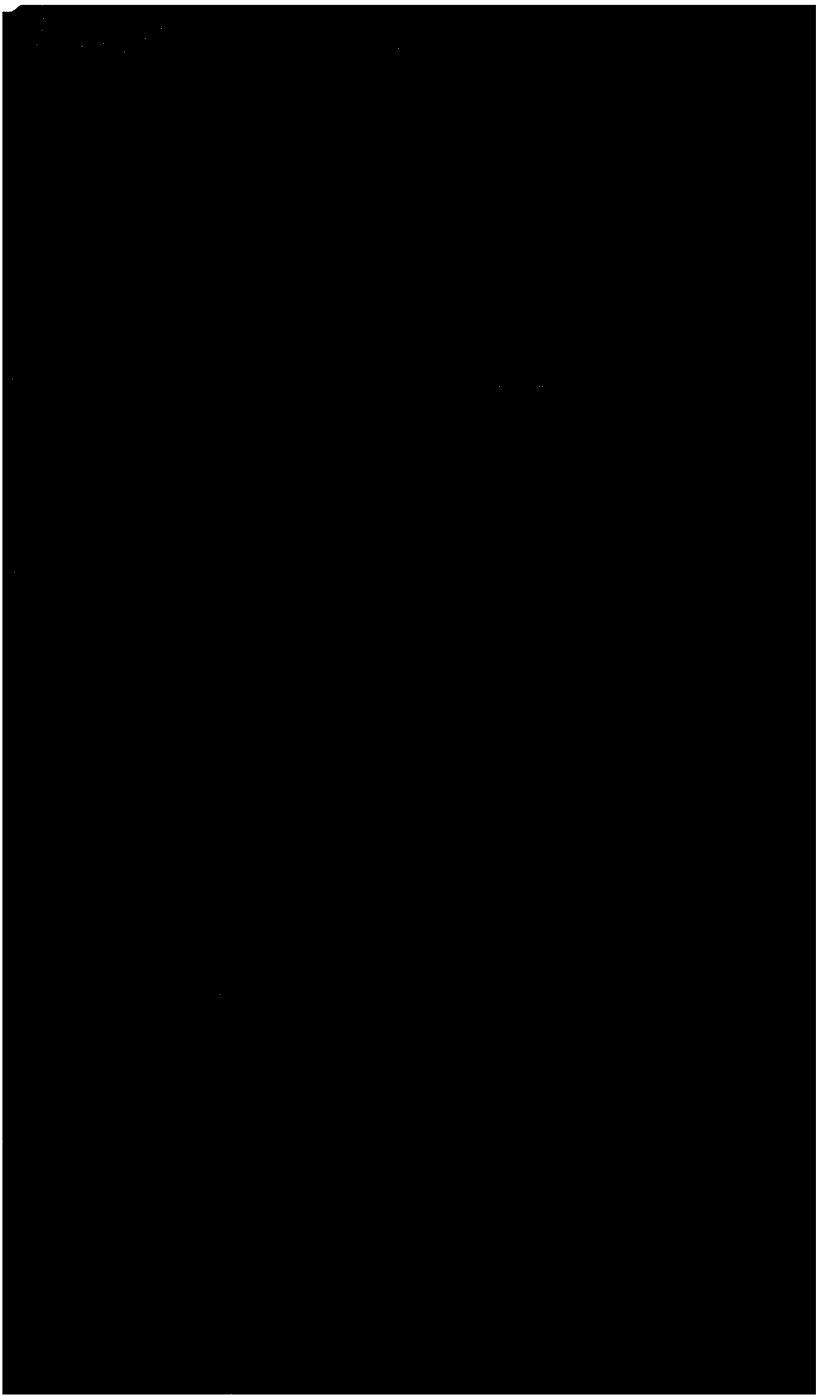
Plate 13. Early Asymmetrical Ground-Plan for Friedrich von Schiller's *Maria Stuart.* Designed by Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen. 1874–1890.

The asymmetrical set provides the basis for greater authenticity and points to the school of naturalism. Two illustrations by Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen will indicate early attempts in this direction. A room in the castle in *Maria Stuart,*[3] shown in Plate Thirteen, has variety. Likewise, for Marwood's room in *Miss Sara Sampson,*[4] shown in Plate Fourteen, the alcove for the bed and the oblique fireplace present architectural variations with conviction and taste.

Booth's Theatre, op. cit., p. 9.
Reproduced by courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York.
From Max Grube, *Geschichte der Meininger* (Stuttgart, 1926), p. 132.
Ibid., Pl. 14.



Plate 14. Design of an Asymmetrical Box Set for Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*, Act II. Designed by Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen. 1874-1890.





The Whistling Oyster, One of the Denizens of Boscobel Kitchen in the Drury Lane Pantomime of *Harlequin Hudibras*. From the Original Drawing by Dykwynkyn.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of Richard Ceough through whose imagination and belief in the theatre the *Theatre Annual* came into being. He planned and edited this issue, but did not live to see it in print. We who remain shall endeavor to keep the *Theatre Annual* to the high standard which he set for it and maintained during the five years of his editorship.

HAS THE BRAZILIAN DRAMA A HISTORY?

by

LEO KIRSCHENBAUM

The following excerpts from an article on the national theatre of Brazil, published in 1929 by Antônio Alcântara Machado, gives us the essence of a commonly held opinion. He writes:

> All manifestations of art attained their natural evolution in Brazil . . . although slowly in comparison with Europe . . . all,—poetry, painting, the novel, criticism, even sculpture. Except the theater. The theater never came to anything . . . it is useless to search for tendencies in our national dramatic literature. They do not exist . . . as yet, it has not put in an appearance, it does not possess any personality of its own . . . leaving aside Martins Penna . . . it does not struggle, it does not forge ahead . . . there is no Brazilian theater.

Standard histories of Brazilian literature dismiss their national drama with apologies, declaring that it died at birth. The four volumes on the history of the Brazilian theatre, published respectively in 1904, 1926, 1936, and 1938, by Enrique Marinho, Carlos Süssekind de Mendonça, Múcio da Paixão, and Lafayette Silva, leave us with our heads in a whirl and a sense of discouragement. They are grab bags of unco-ordinated facts, culled from newspaper notices, old theatre programs, and government laws pertaining to the stage—lists of theatres, titles of plays sprinkled throughout, roll calls of impresarios, actors, and actresses. Occasionally the author will throw in the synopsis of a play which one feels he just happened to have lying about the house. The tale of how the nineteenth-century actor, João Caetano, visited an insane asylum in order to be able to emit a series of blood-curdling howls in the denouement of a melodrama translated from the French, has its little niche in each volume, but nowhere can one find intelligent critical analysis of the stagecraft or a discussion of the literary and social movements reflected in the plays. The *História do Teatro Brasileiro* of Lafayette Silva was the sole entry in a contest of a year's duration, sponsored in 1937 by the Ministry of Education in its campaign to encourage the study of the native Brazilian drama and stimulate a revival of interest in

it. One of the judges informed me that his own original reaction to the manuscript, like that of several of the other judges, was to discard it as valueless, but, in the interests of the program, the final decision was to award it the second prize of ten *contos* (about $500).

In spite of the failure of critics and historians to give consideration to the Brazilian drama as a literary form, a re-examination of the facts may lead to a different conclusion.

It is my opinion that plays of interest and value, indigenous to Brazil, have been written. Brazilians of literary ability and with social perspective have expressed themselves for the stage. The names of some are famous in poetry and in prose, but their contributions to the theatre are virtually unknown. Their efforts in the drama merit the attention of the orthodox historians of Brazilian literature. I base this conclusion on the examination of some 350 plays out of the more than 500 written in Brazil during the Nineteenth Century and the several hundred more that have been written during the Twentieth. Further on I shall discuss some of the plays that I have examined.

It is difficult for the person who wishes to study the Brazilian drama to find copies of the plays. Brazil's reading public has preferred other branches of literature. Consequently, small printings of a few hundred copies, published often at the playwright's expense, have rapidly disappeared, and there is rarely a second edition. A play may turn up now and then when a private library is put up for sale; others are encountered only after hours of dusty research among the shelves of old book shops. But a fairly large number of the play scripts can be found in Rio, in the collection of the moribund Escola Dramática, and in that of the Serviço Nacional de Teatro; also in the Biblioteca Nacional of Rio and the Biblioteca Municipal of São Paulo.

Before we proceed it might be well to touch upon certain factors to give a complete understanding of the historical situation with which we are dealing. The Brazilian drama has not only suffered at the hands of critics and scholars, but has suffered as well from the apathy of the *granfinos* (the "swells") who, educated in Europe, consistently regarded everything native as inferior. From the Nineteenth Century to the present, they have flocked to performances by foreign companies—Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and French—the latter two being the most pop-

ular. Brazão, María Guerrero, Duse, Bernhardt, Coquelin, and Jouvet, to mention but the most illustrious of the visitors, have found it enormously profitable to bring their repertoires to Brazil.

Without the support of the cultured and wealthy, the national theatre has been kept alive during critical periods only by artificial injections of government subsidies. Of all the Brazilians who have written for the stage only three or four, and these contemporary, have been able to gain a livelihood from it. There has been no economic stimulation for full time dedication to the art; dramaturgy has been an avocation, a hobby, a personal passion, and a desire to express oneself before an audience. And the audience, for Brazilian playwrights and actors, has traditionally been lower middle class without discriminating literary taste. The Sociedade Brasileira de Autores Teatrais, organized in 1917 with the purpose of collecting royalties for its members, opposes strenuously any attempt in the direction of a more sophisticated, enlightened theatre. The Society says, "If we try to educate our public, we will lose it. And we have already been badly hurt by the movies."

To sum up: the upper class does not care what happens to the national theatre; the middle class seems to demand its customary fare; and the official representatives of authors and actors tremble at the thought of financial loss resulting from adventures in the more advanced and sophisticated type of drama.

A serious study of the Brazilian drama must begin with the Nineteenth Century. The production of the Colonial period was scanty and derivative. Let us begin then with Martins Penna, the founder of the Brazilian national drama, who concerns himself almost exclusively with the comedy of manners. These comedies in Brazil are anything but profound in content, are at times satirical in spite of themselves, and are intended chiefly to amuse. Yet their characters and situations are original in that they are wholly Brazilian. Because of Penna's traditional position as the one worthy playwright of his country, he has been praised to excess, often compared to Molière; but most of his plays are involved in plot, heavily farcical, or combine the serious and the comic infelicitously. Nevertheless, his rustic types are admirable and, after a hundred years, are recognizable today in their living descendants. Had he lived more than his thirty-three years, his undeniable talent might have attained maturity. He is at his best

in such plays as *The Tavern Keeper* (*O caixeiro da taverna*) and *The Rural Judge* (*O juiz de paz da roça*).

The Rural Judge is a one-act parade of country folk. The central figure is the local judge who settles ridiculous suits in a high-handed way—he declares the Constitution revoked whenever it is in conflict with his judgements, and accepts and solicits bribes in open court. For example, two farmers who dispute the ownership of a pig are told that the only solution is to give it to the judge as a present.

Other interesting characters in the play are the young bumpkin who has deliberately spent his inheritance before marriage so that he and his bride can make a clean start amid the dazzling entertainments of Rio; the girl's father who proudly dons his National Guard uniform to conduct a prisoner to the nearest city where the man will be forced to join the army; and the group of litigants, all alike in their silliness. The play ends with everyone joining in song and dance at the home of the judge.

The two outstanding Brazilian dramatists of the mid-Nineteenth Century were Joaquim Manuel de Macedo and José de Alencar. Their métier was also the comedy of manners. In *The Contested Tower* (*A torre em concurso*), Macedo introduces us, a bit boisterously, to small town factionalism. Alencar in *Both Sides* (*Verso e reverso*) and in *The Family Devil* (*O demônio familiar*), draws a thoroughly delightful and delicate picture of Cariocan atmosphere, habits, and love. *Both Sides* highlights some of the differences between those historical rivals, Rio and São Paulo. *The Family Devil* revolves about Pedro, a *moleque* (young Negro slave), who belongs to a modest middle class Rio household. Entirely ignorant of the possible consequences, Pedro takes it upon himself to be the matchmaker for his master, Eduardo, and the master's sister, without their knowledge or consent. He believes that his lifelong ambition to become a liveried coachman will be realized if he is able to arrange these wealthy marriages. To carry out his plans, Pedro indulges in a series of scandalous acts, such as intercepting letters, delivering them to the wrong persons, fabricating malicious tales, and generally endangering the happiness of those who have always treated him more as a friend than a slave. Fortunately, he is found out before he succeeds in his purpose, and Eduardo punishes him by setting him free and sending him away from the house, declaring that hence-

forth he himself will be held responsible for his actions by society and the law.

What is worthy of note in this play is the convincing and intelligent delineation of the characters—typical Brazilians of their period. The slave is vivacious, malicious, impertinent, and lacking in conscience. His character remains consistent throughout the play. One laughs at his humor and condemns his acts, yet realizes that his lack of education and unenviable position in society are really the causes of his misdeeds. His master is a serious young doctor who considers it most important that a family live together with mutual respect and affection. Another character in the play, Azevedo, represents the Brazilian who has lived in Paris so long that he speaks half French and half Portuguese, and turns up his nose at everything Brazilian. It is Azevedo's belief that a wife's only purpose is to make herself agreeable to influential persons in order to further her husband's career. Young ladies in the play are natural, entertaining the sentiments of the era concerning love and marriage and conducting their love affairs accordingly. *The Family Devil* has proved so popular that it has been constantly revived since its first appearance, something rare in the Brazilian theatre.

The last third of the Nineteenth Century was dominated by Artur Azevedo and França Junior who, together with Martins Penna, have been perhaps the Brazilian playwrights most endowed with innate ability in this métier. Azevedo in *The Dowry* (*O dote*) displays his characteristic witty, natural, and rapid dialogue. It is worth noting in passing that he excelled in parodies of French operettas and in the writing of musical comedies known as Revistas do Ano (Topical Revues). *The Longest Way 'Round* (*Direito por linhas tortas*) of França is the polished successor to Penna's farces; his *The Lady Doctors* (*As doutoras*) hilariously lampoons the nascent feminist movement in Brazil.

Luiza Praxedes, the central character of *The Lady Doctors*, takes pride in being one of the first women to obtain a medical degree in Brazil. She marries Dr. Pereira, a fellow student. To Luiza's mind this will be an ideal companionship for they will share scientific interests and an office. She scorns the old-fashioned concept of love which, she claims, keeps a woman enslaved in the home rearing children. Pereira soon tires of this marriage arrangement with Luiza. He feels that his wife does not consider him

the head of the family, and to make matters worse he notices that she is beginning to prescribe for patients whom he looks upon as his own. Planning a divorce, Pereira engages a friend, Carlota Aguiar, as his lawyer. She is an emancipated Doctor of Jurisprudence. Luiza, in the belief that there is something between her husband and Carlota, begins to suffer pangs of jealousy, an emotion which she has been wont to ridicule as outmoded. Her ideas change completely and she retires from practice to get back her husband. Carlota also abandons her profession, and in the last scene, one sees the two *doutoras* (blue stockings) happily nursing their infants.

The typically Brazilian humor in this play is diverting and springs naturally from the many comic situations. The two young career women are characterized by their continuous pedantic pronouncements on life, medicine. and the law.

Passing to the "Twenties" of our own century, and continuing our examination of the comedy of manners, we find the theme of country versus city life, and national virtues versus foreign shortcomings, treated skilfully by Viriato Correa in *Our People* (*Nossa gente*), and political ambition good-naturedly derided by Armando Gonzaga in *Justice of the Supreme Court* (*Ministro do supremo*). In 1938, Ernani Fornaro in *Iaiá Boneca,* the first play performed under the program of the Ministry of Education, dealt with nineteenth-century customs, costumes, and characters. Oduvaldo Vianna in *Sunny Mornings* (*Manhãs de sol*) sentimentally depicted the influence of the Brazilian landscape on young hearts. The play is permeated with a sense of the sun, the plants, the trees, flowers, birds, and air of Brazil.

The first two acts of *Sunny Mornings* take place in the São Paulo countryside, and the third on Governador Island in Rio Bay. Leonor, while visiting her aunts and cousins, falls in love with Alvaro, a young doctor of Rio, who is spending several months in the country. Leonor is seventeen, gay and carefree. She carries in her heart an idealistic dream of humanity being regenerated through the appreciation of the wonders of nature. The beautiful sunny mornings that Alvaro and Leonor enjoy together are inextricably woven into their love. Leonor is shattered when Alvaro confesses that he is married. He explains that although his wife has left him, there is no possibility of a divorce. Alvaro then disappears. Eight years later, he returns from Europe.

In the meantime his wife has died and he is reunited with Leonor who is about to become a nun.

Sunny Mornings is admirable in that its atmosphere is genuine and its people come alive. In addition to the two principal characters, there are the tyrannical, sadistic aunt, her two daughters whose fear of their mother dominates their lives, and the demented century-old former slave who wanders about with an imaginary companion. The play has been performed in both Spanish and Italian translations.

Turning to the Brazilian social drama, we find the playwrights pointing out the faults and problems of contemporary society. The earliest examples of this type of drama appear after the mid-Nineteenth Century, influenced by the French drama of bourgeois morality and the thesis plays, represented by Augier and Dumas *fils*. In Brazil, Quintino Bocayuva preaches middle class virtue in *The Family* (*A família*), and Manuel de Macedo castigates greed for wealth and false family pride in *Luxury and Vanity* (*Luxo e vaidade*). Both of these plays are melodramatic, but, in spite of their technical defects and exaggerated sentimentalism, Bocayuva and Macedo succeed in conveying a respectable amount of dramatic conviction in them.

In the opening scene of *Luxury and Vanity,* Macedo sets the tone of the play. The wife is in front of the mirror dyeing her hair; her husband, a minor government employee, is studying his monthly bills in despair; and their daughter is eyeing young men in the street from her window. It becomes known that the servants have been unpaid for months; that the family has been living far beyond its means for years, and now is facing imminent bankruptcy. The parents think that the only solution to the problem is to marry off their daughter to an elderly, wealthy suitor. This marriage would then enable them to maintain their ostentatious home, keep their titled friends, and continue the enjoyment of boasting of their imaginary lineage. Creditors soon descend on them and the family is abandoned by all those whom they have showered with lavish hospitality. The husband's brother, a cabinetmaker, who has not been received by his family for a long time because of his lowly occupation, comes in and offers to pay the family's debts with his life's savings. They accept gratefully, and, deeply repentant, promise to lead a more simple existence.

Throughout the five acts of this play, the three weak-minded members of the family are upbraided by the author's mouthpiece, a homiletic uncle from the provinces who composes variations on his theme: "The wastrel and the dissipator, victims of luxury and vanity, have no right to ask for pity. They are immoral creatures who pervert society with their bad example and merit severe punishment." In the fourth act of the play, there is a symbolic note. A carnival masquerade ball is in progress and, amid the music and gaiety, the *raissoneur* apostrophizes various persons, informing them that their masks are false, that whatever they may call themselves, their true names are Weakness, Vanity, Stupidity, Envy, and Treachery. *Luxury and Vanity* is a typical nineteenth-century thesis play.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Brazilian social theatre, from an historical perspective, is the Abolitionist drama. It discloses a staggering picture of cruelty and callousness which is likely to astound those who have mistakenly assumed that the tolerant attitude of the white toward the black in Brazil was carried over into the institution of slavery. I have found three plays that revolve entirely about this subject; many more must have been written. They are: *Mother* (*Mãe*) of José de Alencar (1860), *Rich Rabble* (*Corja opulenta*) of Joaquim Nunes (1887), and *The Slaveholder* (*O escravocrata*) of Artur Azevedo and Urbindo Duarte (1882). All end in tragedy, springing from the discovery of slave blood in a supposedly pure family, or from the slave-dealer's greed.

As social documents these plays are unique. Their propagandistic fervor overshadows their literary merits. The Conservatorio Dramático kept *The Slaveholder* from performance, even after the authors had waged a two-year struggle to bring it before the public. In the preface to the published play, Azevedo and Duarte maintain that the damning truths had terrified the authorities.

In the first act of *The Slaveholder,* Salazar wishes to sell one of his slaves, Lourenço, who has been with the family for twenty-five years. Salazar is no longer able to endure Lourenço's impertinence, and the affectionate way the slave is treated by his wife, Gabriela, and his son and daughter, Gustavo and Carolina. Lourenço warns Gabriela that if he is sent away, he will disclose the secret that Gustavo is not Salazar's son but his. Salazar is made to

relent when he is promised that there will be no objection to his beating Lourenço whenever the Negro becomes insolent.

In the second act, Gustavo is about to pocket some money that he has stolen from his father's desk to pay gambling debts when his action is intercepted by Lourenço who tears the money from him. Gustavo strikes the slave who, in a rage, forgetting his promise to Gabriela, cries out just as she enters the room, "This slap may be your right in the eyes of men, but it is sacrilege in the eyes of God. I am your father!" Lourenço then flees from the house.

When the third act opens, we find that Gabriela has gone insane, and that her son has suffered a complete physical collapse. These events confirm the long-standing suspicion of Josefa, Salazar's sister, that her brother's dark, kinky-headed son is in fact Lourenço's. She convinces Salazar of this, and he rushes off to confront Gustavo who, admitting that he is the son of the slave, declares that the cursed, oppressed race avenges itself as it can by dishonoring the families of the whites. Lourenço is brought back in chains, but he breaks loose and hangs himself. Gustavo's body is found beside that of his father. The play ends with an armed revolt of the slaves on Salazar's estate.

Salazar is cruel and sadistic; he considers slaves as animals who must be made to work until they drop. He takes pleasure in beating them, doing so on any pretext, and he has seen to it that his overseer on the estate is as sadistic as himself. His hatred is directed toward the Abolitionists whom he considers contemptible wretches who have failed in their careers, and jealous of slaveholders, have turned to preaching Liberation. Salazar's characterization is the only one with which the authors have taken pains, and he is depicted without one redeeming quality.

Gabriela has lived for twenty-five years in the terror that her misstep will be discovered. Gustavo is weak, dissolute, and only interested in the pursuit of pleasure. Lourenço is ruled by his desire to remain by the side of his son. The Abolitionist of the play is Eugenio, Carolina's suitor, who declares that slavery is the real cause of Brazil's material, moral, and intellectual backwardness. He says that immigrants either do not come to Brazil, or leave soon after they do, because they refuse to compete with slave labor. One comic character, Serafim, relieves the tragic atmosphere of the drama. He resigns from the "Uncle Tom Aboli-

tionist Club" to work for Salazar. On every possible occasion he curses and beats the slaves in order to curry favor with his employer. Then, after the revolt, he decides that his occupation is too dangerous, and plans to become an Abolitionist once more.

The economic depression of the 1930's, accompanied by a surge of political radicalism, had its repercussion in the Brazilian drama. *Cannon Fodder* (*Carne para canhão*) by Afonso Schmidt, is anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, and pro-Soviet, predicting World War II which, according to the playwright, was to be instigated by the munitions makers to rid society of its impoverished masses. The play suffers from superabundant material. Alfredo Mesquita in *In the Family* (*Em família*) describes with psychological insight the impact of the '29 crash on the family of an affluent coffee-grower of São Paulo. Joracy Camargo wrote *May God Repay You* (*Deus lhe pague*), the most successful play ever produced in Brazil, judging from its earnings and the number of its performances. It is a strongly socialistic play, although the author told me that it had been much toned down by the censor. Its popularity, however, was more the result of its ingenious plot, full of cleverly spaced surprises. It is unfortunate that Camargo is now wasting his talent in creating pale copies of this play.

May God Repay You opens with the Beggar on the steps of a church, explaining his social philosophy and relating the story of his life to a fellow mendicant. In his twenty-five years of begging he has accumulated a large fortune. He employs a secretary who culls the newspapers to find out where fashionable Masses, weddings, and festivities are going to take place. According to the Beggar, the asking for alms is triply profitable, because it permits the sinners to atone for their sins by giving; makes it possible for the non-sinners to establish credit with the Lord; and convinces the exploiters of the masses that their charity prevents revolution, making them grateful to the beggars as a class which does not struggle against them. The Beggar had formerly been a poor factory worker whose plans for a new machine were stolen from his wife by his employer. As a result, his wife became insane and he was jailed for attacking the boss. These events of a quarter-century earlier are shown in the play by a flash-back in the first act. Before the act ends, the scene returns to the church, and a beautiful and elegantly dressed young woman, about to enter the

church, gives the Beggar's companion a coin while the Beggar covers his face with his hat. The young woman is Nancy, the Beggar's mistress, who believes him to be a capitalist. The Beggar then tells his companion about Nancy, saying that she has remained faithful to him, in spite of the great difference in their ages, because of her curiosity regarding his character and history, and because he has convinced her that money, not youth, is necessary for happiness.

The scene changes to Nancy's luxurious apartment. Pericles, a young man of social standing, urges Nancy to give up her elderly lover and go away with him. She refuses to go because he has no money. The Beggar enters. His tattered clothes have been discarded; he is well dressed and bears himself like a wealthy man. Pericles, pretending that he is Nancy's brother and in grave difficulties, obtains five thousand dollars from the Beggar while Nancy is out of the room. When Pericles tells Nancy that he will be wealthy the next day, she decides to abandon the Beggar. Once again in front of the church, the second act closes with Pericles flinging a few cents to the Beggar.

The source of Pericles' money is revealed to Nancy by the Beggar who then tells her that, if she wishes, she may keep the money and try to be happy with the young man. He proceeds to disclose his real occupation to her, and then departs. Nancy comes to the conclusion that true happiness cannot be found with the unscrupulous Pericles and sets out on a search for the Beggar. She finds him on the church steps, throws the bank notes into his hat, and embraces him.

The author's purpose in this play is less to construct an entertaining plot than to criticize and satirize contemporary society through the character of the highly philosophical and sardonic Beggar who has withdrawn from normal pursuits to observe the flow of life, and to grow rich on the scraps which Society throws to him. A few of the many and somewhat disparate subjects upon which the Beggar enlarges to the other characters in the course of the play are: Communism—the bogey-man who frightens children; greed and exploitation inherent in the owning classes; the self-destructiveness of the middle class; real beggars are those who give alms, not those who receive them; and intelligence —the only eternal force.

A word should be said about the experimental theatre. As

far as can be determined, the initiator of the Brazilian Experimental Theatre is Oswald de Andrade, one of the leaders of the Brazilian Modernist movement which originated in São Paulo around 1920. In *The Dead Woman* (*A morta*) and *Man and Horse* (*O homem e o cavalo*), written in 1937 and 1934 respectively, Andrade indicts a world corrupted by materialistic capitalism. His panorama is rampant with symbolism; his characters are men and beasts taken from mythology, the Bible, and ancient and modern history. Parts of these plays are incomprehensible, but there is no denying the author's imaginative power and epic sweep. The government, displeased by Andrade's openly Marxist solution, stopped the performances.

Socialism triumphant over decadent capitalism is the central theme of the surrealist play, *Man and Horse*. The action is laid in various places: in Heaven, in a stratosphere balloon, on the old earth, on the new Red planet of socialism, on Saint Peter's boat, and in a soviet nursery. A soldier-poet, anxious to instill his love for war, fascism, and Aryan purity into men, sets sail for the earth with Saint Peter and Professor Icarus. Reaching their destination, they are greeted by the Trojan Horse who maintains that he is a conservative horse. When he was opened after the first World War, a small Trojan Horse, called the Treaty of Versailles, was found within him, and within the smaller horse, there was Chancellor Hitler. The Trojan Horse is insulted by Napoleon's battle-horse, formerly white, but now White Russian. Rosinante, the idealistic steed of Don Quixote, is now ridden by Sancho Panza—the bourgeoisie in search of fascism. Mister Byron and Lord Capone bemoan the approaching proletarian revolution. It has not been possible to delude the masses with sports or religion; not even with sex in the person of Cleopatra who manages a taxi-dance hall. Capitalism is defeated in a great struggle. Three soviet children discuss the benefits of socialism and review the evils of class-society that is gone forever. The Voice of Stalin declares that the Horse of Peace, Industrialization, and Plenty, has taken the place of the Horse of War, Famine, Disease, and Exploitation. Christ is put on trial for having influenced men toward war by allowing His name to be used in national anthems. Saint Peter becomes a convert to the New Society. The play ends with a group of aged Martians, dressed in boy-scout uniforms, arriving to visit the Red planet. Some of

the other characters who appear in the series of impressionistic scenes of this play are: Swedenborg, the dog, a mounted Valkyrie, the Voices of Job and Eisenstein, a Tiger, the Red-Soldier of John Reed, Mary Magdalene, Baron Rothschild, Fu-Manchu, and D'Artagnan.

In December of 1943, Os Comediantes, an enthusiastic group of amateurs who today are the vanguard of progress in the Brazilian theatre, presented *Wedding Gown* (*Vestido de noiva*) by Nelson Rodrigues. It was beautifully staged by Santa Rosa, as artistic director, and brilliantly acted by a picked cast. This highly original tragedy, which utilizes elements of Freudian psychology in its story, takes place on three levels of the stage simultaneously: the first, representing the plane of hallucination; the second, the plane of memory; and the third, the plane of reality.

A young bride, Alaíde, is seriously injured in an automobile accident. In the hospital, the surgeons attempt to save her life. She lies on the operating table on the upper level, her mind obsessed with hallucinations and memories revolving about past fear, undisclosed desire, and the incidents of her marriage. As her imagination summons up various episodes, they are portrayed on their respective planes; whenever there is action on one level, the others are blacked out.

On the plane of Hallucination, Alaíde meets Madame Clessi, a middle-aged adventuress, who was murdered many years before by her seventeen-year-old lover. Alaíde has always envied Madame Clessi her exciting life, and in her heart of hearts has wished to be like her, but never possessed sufficient courage to break conventional bounds. As the two women converse in a low cabaret, Alaíde is thrown into a panic by several men who appear, all having the face of her husband, Pedro. Alaíde says that she has murdered Pedro but cannot be certain of it. Madame Clessi asks her to concentrate and try to recall. On the plane of Memory, one sees Alaíde kill Pedro, but this turns out to be a false recollection—the fruit of wishful thinking. Alaíde's memory is also troubled by a veiled woman who threatens to take Pedro from her just before the wedding ceremony. Again, under Madame Clessi's guidance, Alaíde recognizes the stranger as her sister, Lúcia, with whom Pedro had first been in love. After his

marriage to Alaíde, he had discovered that Lúcia was the one for whom he really cared.

The action on the planes of Hallucination and Memory is interrupted at intervals by scenes on the plane of Reality—reporters telephoning the latest details of the accident to their papers, Pedro visiting the hospital, and conferences of surgeons. Alaíde dies in the operation. In the last scene, also on the plane of Reality, Lúcia, in *her* wedding gown, leaves to be married to Pedro. She asks for her bouquet, and Alaíde, also dressed as a bride, rises ghostlike from her tomb and presents it to her.

Wedding Gown is a gripping play. It is a beacon of light for the future of Brazilian drama.

POE — DRAMA CRITIC

by

N. BRYLLION FAGIN

Most people think that the exhibitions of bad temper between the workers and the critics of the theatre which have recently appeared on the theatre's horizon are characteristic of our times. This is hardly so. In 1845, when Edgar Allan Poe was the drama critic on the *Broadway Journal*,[1] Palmo's Theatre, on April 7, presented Sophocles' *Antigone* with music by Mendelssohn. Poe's review of the play appeared on April 12. Immediately thereafter, W. Dinneford, the producer of the play, accused Mr. Poe of being ill natured and unjust in his review and informed him that:

> In *justice* . . . to MYSELF, I have withdrawn your name *from* the free list. I am always prepar'd to submit, as a caterer for public amusement, to any *just* remarks, though they may be severe, but I do not feel MYSELF called upon to offer *facilities* to any one, to do me *injury* by animadversions evidently marked by ill *feeling*.[2]

Mr. Dinneford's letter of protest with Mr. Poe's reply was printed in the *Broadway Journal* of April 19. In the reply, Poe made fun of Mr. Dinneford's "shockingly bad hand," complained that the letter had been sent without payment of postage, and jibed at Mr. Dinneford's style of living. But, along with these betrayals of ill temper and bad manners, the reply constituted a sort of critical manifesto; a ringing declaration of the critic's duty to remain independent and uninfluenced in his judgments by considerations of self-interest. Poe wrote:

> We are not wasting words on this Quinneford [Poe deliberately misread the gentleman's name]—it is the public to whom we speak—to the editorial corps in especial. We wish to call attention to the peculiar character of the *conditions* which managers such as this have the impudence to *avow*, as attached to the privilege of the free list. No puff, no privilege, is the contract. That is to say, an editor, when admitted to the theatre, is to be understood as leaving his conscience in the street. He is admitted not to judge—not to criticize—but to adulate.

[1] A weekly. File to be found in the New York Public Library.

[2] *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by James A. Harrison (New York 1902), Vol. XII, p. 136.

This courageous stand of Poe's was all the more important because it came at a time when drama criticism was, in his own summarizing phrase, "in the control of illiterate mountebanks."[3]

As to the justice of Poe's review of *Antigone,* that is part of the story of his methods and ideas; part of his contribution to American drama criticism.

Poe's presently known writings as a critic consist of eight play reviews. Some may consider this to be a small amount of material from which to draw any conclusions concerning his practices, principles, and point of view as a drama critic, yet they reveal a theory of the theatre that is surprisingly modern, and voice ideas which are, as one literary historian believes, "easily seventy-five years in advance of their time."[4]

Nearly every one of Poe's reviews begins with a synopsis of the plot, and it is in these synopses that his training as a "magazinist" displays itself brilliantly. Each is clear, objective, to the point. Even when Poe intends to tear down the play, his synopsis generally is just and unclouded by his intention. All relevant details and complications are deftly and economically given, so that his discussion can be followed by one who may not have seen or read the play.

Poe's definition of plot, stated on several occasions, was a "construction" in which "no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole." "It is," he said, "a building so dependently constructed that to change the position of a single brick is to overthrow the entire fabric."[5] His adherence to this definition as a working formula in criticizing a theatre presenting Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer-Lytton, and Dion Boucicault, caused him to pronounce adverse judgment on all the plays he reviewed.

Poe's review of Mrs. Cora Mowatt's *Fashion* consists of seven paragraphs of synopsis, and eight of comment. Poe's first objection to Mrs. Mowatt's play was that the plot was unoriginal. His summary of the conventional stage incidents it utilized reads like a page in the writings of a modern critic. "Their hackneyism," he said, "is no longer to be endured. The day has at length arrived when men demand rationalities in place of conventionalities."[6]

[3] *Southern Literary Messenger,* May 1936; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. VIII, p. 322.
[4] George E. De Mille, *Literary Criticism in America* (New York 1931), p. 105.
[5] Review of Bulwer-Lytton's *Night and Morning* (1841), *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. X, pp. 116-117.
[6] *Broadway Journal,* March 29, 1845; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 117.

A similar objection was made to Nathaniel Parker Willis's *Tortesa the Usurer*. Poe thought that three fourths of the plot could be removed and not be missed; it being full of incidents that had no bearing on the denouement. He considered Willis uninventive, conventional, hackneyed, and thought that the play abounded in incidents previously used by other playwrights from Shakespeare to Boucicault. He claimed that the play lacked unity; its underplot not being properly integrated with the main action, which itself lacked sufficient motivation, and, consequently, remained implausible.

It is clear, of course, that when the plot of a play is presumed to lack plausibility the characters naturally become an easy target for the critic. To Poe's mind, neither Willis nor Mrs. Mowatt had succeeded in creating strong or distinguished characters. He said that Tortesa himself was inconsistent in his behavior, and that Mrs. Mowatt's creations were only unnatural stage automatons rather than human beings. Poe thought that the trouble with both these writers was that they followed other playwrights instead of observing nature. "There is not one particle of any nature," Poe complained of *Fashion,* "beyond green-room nature in it . . . Our fault finding is on the score of deficiency in verisimilitude—in natural art—that is to say, in art based in the natural laws of man's heart and understanding."[7]

Poe once wrote in a marginal note that "the preposterous 'asides' and soliloquys of the drama among civilized nations" made "the shifts employed by the Chinese playwrights appear respectable."[8] He used similar words in condemning Willis and Mrs. Mowatt for the use of "asides" and soliloquies in their plays. "Will our playwrights," he asked, "never learn, through the dictates of common sense, that an audience under no circumstances can or will be brought to conceive that what is sonorous in their own ears at a distance of fifty feet from the speaker cannot be heard by an actor at the distance of one or two?"[9]

On the other hand, Poe thought Mrs. Mowatt's and Mr. Willis's plays theatrical, if not dramatic. When he came to review Longfellow's *Spanish Student,* he thought it neither one nor the other. Here once again we meet with the old objection to the plot

[7] *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 118.

[8] "Marginalia," *Works of Poe,* edited by Stedman and Woodberry (Chicago 1895), Vol. VII, p. 33.

[9] *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 119.

—it is unoriginal in subject, incident, and tone. We also find him saying that Mr. Longfellow's production is not of a play at all. It should have been called a dramatic poem because, says Poe, "it could not be endured upon the stage."[10] For "closet drama" Poe had little respect. In his opinion, it was "an anomaly—a paradox—a mere figure of speech. There should be no such things as closet-dramas. The proof of the *dramatism* is the capacity of representation."[11]

Poe does not often commit himself on matters of production as his interest is confined largely to playwriting, but what he has to say on this subject is equally ahead of the practices of his day.

In the production of *Fashion,* he objected to the "rectangular crossings and recrossings of the *dramatis personae* on the stage; the coming forward to the footlights when anything of interest is to be told; the reading of private letters in a loud rhetorical tone. . . ."[12] In other words, he objected to the entire style of the pre-naturalistic theatre. Nevertheless, he saw that good production sometimes can save a bad play and that popularity was often the result of stage effects rather than of playwriting. "If," he predicted, " 'Fashion' succeeds at all . . . it will owe the greater portion of its success to the very carpets, the very ottomans, the very chandeliers, and the very conservatories that gained so decided a popularity for the most inane and utterly despicable of all modern comedies—the 'London Assurance' of Boucicault."[13] Later, after having seen several performances of the play, he complimented the Park Theatre management on "the effective manner in which 'Fashion' has been brought forward."[14]

One modern essayist has characterized Poe as "the Mencken and Nathan and Burton Rascoe of his day all mixed together in one hell's brew."[15] This may contain a modicum of truth. In his review of *Antigone* he first demolished it as a play for "modern" audiences, the very notion of producing it being "the idea of a pedant," and then, after praising Mendelssohn's music as "Greek thought adapted into German," he proceeded to attack "the miser-

[10] *The American Whig Review,* August 1845; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XIII, p. 61.
[11] *Doings of Gotham,* collected by Jacob E. Spanuth (Pottsville, Pennsylvania 1929), p. 97.
[12] *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 119.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 120.
[14] *Broadway Journal,* April 5, 1845; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 128.
[15] Arnold Mulder, "American Criticism for American Readers," *Essay Annual,* ed. Erich A. Walter (Chicago 1937), p. 124.

able way in which the choruses were executed: A large number of men are paraded upon the stage, scarcely one third of them singing correctly, while the other two thirds either do not sing at all, or vamp the words and music. . . . Indeed the whole of the musical arrangements reflect but little credit upon Mr. Loder's reputation as an energetic and skillful conductor."[16]

Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* received dispraise. "The whole design" of the play, Poe wrote, was "not only unnatural but an arrant impossibility. The heart of no woman could ever have been reached by brute violence." The imitation of the same play at Niblo's that same year, entitled *Katharine and Petruchio,* and in which Mrs. Mowatt played Katharine, also brought forth Poe's disapproval. He said that it was "absolutely beneath contempt—a mere jumble of unmeaning rant, fuss, whip-smacking, crockery-cracking, and other Tom-Foolery of a similar kind." He treated Mrs. Mowatt gently, although he liked her better in Planché's *Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady,* a play which he could praise at least for "the neat epigrammatic spirit of the French Vaudeville." But her leading man, Mr. Crisp, received only sledge-hammer blows. Poe finished him off with the massive word "intolerable," just as he finished off Miss Taylor, another actress at Niblo's, by pointing out that she "spoke and stepped like a chambermaid rather than a princess."[17]

Professor Odell, the annalist of the New York stage, has remarked that Poe reviewed *Fashion* "with the effect of breaking a butterfly on the wheel."[18] The butterfly must have survived the ordeal, for the play was a huge success in 1845 and was revived in 1929. It is still being played from time to time in our community and college theatres.

Theatre producers must have feared Poe's dry, oblique reportorial style as much as his positive animadversions. Surely the following one-paragraph review, cast in the form of a mere news item, is as devastating in effect as his more picturesque vituperative vocabulary:

> At the Chatham a vast number of people without coats [this review appeared in August], have been thrown into raptures by the representation of "The Female Horsethief," in which the leading character is one Margaret Catchpole, and the leading incident her riding *en homme* a very lazy and very stupid little horse.[19]

[16] *Broadway Journal,* April 12, 1845; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 135.
[17] *Broadway Journal,* August 2, 1845; also *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, pp. 210-211.
[18] George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage,* Vol. V, p. 100.
[19] *Works,* ed. Harrison, Vol. XII, p. 212.

Poe was a severe critic equipped with a sharp style, yet he was more than that. In some ways he was a champion of the best types of American drama and theatre today. He believed in realistic drama, containing plausible plots and presenting characters that are recognizable human beings. He insisted on acting based on direct observation of nature rather than on hackneyed theatrical traditions. Had he been able he would have cleared the stage of tricksters and pretenders. He even chided Mrs. Mowatt for affecting "an occasional Anglicism of accent."[20] At a time when our native drama was held in contempt by critics and public alike, he preached the doctrine that "to Americans the American drama is the special point of interest."[21] Mr. Poe spoke for these things a long time ago.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[21] *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 37.

ON CUTTING SHAKESPEARE — AND OTHER MATTERS

by

MARGARET WEBSTER

The cutting of a Shakespearian text for production on the professional stage in America poses, like other problems in the same field (or perhaps I should say "battlefield"), many considerations. They are, as usual, contradictory in nature and effect, and range from the artistic to the financial, from the scholarly to the expedient, from the dramatic to the trivial.

Of course you have to make up your mind to begin with whether you intend to interpret Shakespeare's own text as nearly as you are able, following what you conceive to have been his intention as closely as possible, or whether you intend to use "the immortal man" to illustrate a contemporary thesis, or simply to provide "a show." On the principle of making Shakespeare fit the headlines, Mr. Orson Welles contrived a brilliant show in his memorable *Julius Caesar*. He did not attempt, and would never have claimed, to put on the stage the drama that Shakespeare had had in mind, nor to preserve Shakespeare's values. The character of Caesar sacrificed subtlety to unity of effect; the penetrating irony at the expense of Mark Antony was blurred into oblivion, and the key character of Octavius, so economically and bitingly etched by the author, vanished altogether, along with almost all the last third of the play. Perhaps, had Mr. Welles been able to lift the curtain of future events a little higher, he might have effected a shrewd political comment out of some kind of a post-assassination conflict between Brutus-Byrnes, Cassius-Bevin, Octavius-Molotov, or the like. For Mr. Welles, assassination was almost the end; for Shakespeare it was only the beginning. But, at all events, the Welles' *Caesar* was as exciting as a modern thriller with "additional dialogue" by Will Shakespeare, and a superb piece of theatre.

Another school of thought, less politically inclined but aiming to attract audiences whose ears have grown accustomed to modern

slang delivered over microphones, instead of Elizabethan English and the un-amplified human voice, contends that the actual vocabulary should be simplified for modern playgoers. With this view I am in hearty disagreement. It seems to me that our language has become so much impoverished that it is part of the duty and obligation of our stage to display the richness of the speech which we inherit and have so sterilised and wasted; nor do I think that the public is half as "dumb" as is usually supposed. If playgoers are driven to read the plays before going to see them in performance, so much the better for everybody concerned, including themselves.

I admit, however, to considerable difficulties when it comes to the comedies. Verbal complexities, topical allusions—which I feel sure are even more numerous than the scholars suppose or than we have any way of tracing—satires on trends and personalities and habits of phrase or behavior—all these have worn out their sting and lost the power to provoke laughter. Not, of course, the comedy of great and universal humanity. Falstaff, witness Ralph Richardson's performance of him, is as rich as ever. His speech on honour has as deeply cutting an edge, his speech on drinking as warm and raffish a charm, as ever they had in 1600.

Looking over my own prompt copy of *Twelfth Night,* which was played in a very faithful text, I find that I sacrificed some lines because of what I judged to be sheer unintelligibility, and some because I couldn't get the actors to make them sound funny, even though I knew they were funny. What I may call "actors' cuts" are often forced upon the reluctant director, and though it may be a little unfair to Mr. Shakespeare, one cannot leave out of account the human medium through which his plays must live. In the former category came such lines as:

> "Are they like to take dust, like Mrs. Mall's picture?" (Act I, sc. iii)
> "Sowter will cry upon't for all this, though it be as rank as a fox." (Act II, sc. v)

and

> "I would play Lord Pandarus of Phrygia, sir, to bring a Cressida to this Troilus." (Act III, sc. i)

In the second category, I yearned a little wistfully for the departure of such phrases as "for it comes to pass oft that a

terrible oath, with a swaggering accent sharply twang'd off, gives manhood more approbation than ever proof itself would have earned him." (Act III, sc. iv). The famous lines about "Malvolio's nose is no whip-stock, etc." (Act II, sc. iii) came somewhere betwixt and between the reasons I have stated. Indeed I believe that they were dependent for their effect on some piece of stage business which Feste did at the same time, and which I was not inventive enough to devise.

My *Twelfth Night* text was, however, a very complete one, and the "romantic scenes" were hardly touched, but for a few minor phrase-cuts which came under the general (and sometimes dangerous) head of "tightening-up." For some reason the comedy scenes in *The Tempest* seemed easier to play to present-day audiences. This may have been because I had two brilliant actors for Stephano and Trinculo—Jan Werich and George Voskovec, who had been reared in the genuine, ancient, and honourable tradition of "clowns," in the best sense of the word. Perhaps, too, the mellowing influence of liquor, which plays so large a part in their scenes, has remained one of the most immutable sources of laughter. And certain of the "business" which the text clearly dictates involves the use of stage tricks which are current in vaudeville to this day. It is simple fun, but none the worse for that. With the complicated give-and-take of Antonio, Sebastian and Co., I found myself forced to take more drastic measures. Their scenes are commonly supposed to be "dull," and though it is my own view that Act II, sc. i, is in every sense admirable craftsmanship and full of dramatic and ironic value, it is nevertheless apt to "drag" between the showier and easier sections of the play.

For some reason, obscure to me, I gained through *The Tempest* a reputation for being somewhat ruthless with regard to Shakespeare's texts. I was supposed to have given Ariel's lines to other actors, and to have done all sorts of things which actually never even occurred to me. With two important exceptions, the text was, again, a very full one. The first exception was the omission of the Masque in Act. IV, sc. i, and the second, the transposition of Prospero's superb speech, "Our revels now are ended," to finish the play. The first might easily have motivated the second. Actually, it didn't. The feeling that the "revels" speech

would make a perfect ending, epitomising the whole spirit and purpose of the play, came to me when I was first studying the text for production. Afterwards I found some shreds of corroborative opinion from Mr. Dover Wilson. But I think I would have made the change anyway. And the hush of a stilled house, truly and deeply moved and touched, as the lights faded to nothing over the final lines, was a reward, and, I think, a justification.

The cutting of the Masque, for which there is a much greater bulwark of editorial opinion, was of mixed motivation. There was the extreme likelihood that the Masque was a later addition to the play caused by the marriage ceremonies of the Prince of Wales, for which it was probably inserted. There was also the hard, mean, calculating, and ignoble fact that, to do it really well, so that it did in truth supply an added note of fantasy and beauty, would have cost the management $800 a week, or even more; and in these days when it is extremely hard to "break even" with so heavy a show as *The Tempest,* I had to consider whether there was $800 a week's worth of entertainment in that Masque. I tried to keep the goddesses and their song without the "ballet" which follows; they actually sang in our Philadelphia try-out in costumes costing around $450 each, I may add, and complete with one whole "Attendant" similarly attired. But it was no good. The Masque demanded all or nothing, and in its truncated form merely distracted from the main drive of the play.

Twelfth Night and *The Tempest,* though considerably longer than most contemporary scripts, are still among the shortest of Shakespeare's plays. *Othello* was another matter, from every point of view, and the cutting of it was an extremely intricate affair. Personally, there is hardly a line in it, except for the Clown's scenes, that I would willingly omit. Nevertheless, suburban trains and buses do not wait on deathless poetry, and the regulations as to the payment of overtime to stage-hands do not give way before the behest of genius. The version which I staged, arranged, and produced with Paul Robeson in 1943 "rang up" as close to 8:30 as we could induce an unpunctual and nonchalant public to condescend to take its seats, and "rang down" as close to 11:30—the witching hour at which overtime begins—as we dared go. I daresay it was as full a text as has ever been played on the American stage, and at that, though I

think and hope the cuts were dextrous and unobtrusive, it was not long enough for me!

There were few cuts of more than two or three lines together. I omitted the aforesaid clown scenes without regret; as I did, also, the two long rhymed speeches of the Duke and Brabantio in the Senate scene, which (Mr. Granville Barker to the contrary) have always appeared to me extraordinarily out of rhythm and in a wholly different style and manner from the rest of the verse. I cut the Herald's speech (Act II, sc. ii), and transposed the essential portion of the opening of the following "scene" up to Othello's exit. This had the effect of running the whole Cyprus sequence together, from the arrival in Cyprus to the end of Act II, sc. iii. Even then, though a change of locale was necessary, I deliberately contrived to keep the action continuous. (Such continuity was, of course, an essential part of Elizabethan performances.) Criticism was levelled at what was alleged to be the consequent "rush" and "crowding" of the action. But this, I think, was precisely what Shakespeare meant. He did not mean Othello to have time to stop and think—nor the audience to weigh probabilities and time-elements. He built dazzlingly fast, with superb assurance and precision, to his stupendous climax.

For the rest, Iago's long speeches in the first act came in for a lot of quiet pruning—they had to. My apologies are hereby tendered to those of my readers who love, as dearly as I do, such penetrating phrases as:

> Preferment goes by letter and affection,
> Not by the old gradation, . . .

and

> . . . the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts,
> shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida.

But I had to cut something! And the choice was, again, partly dictated by the actor's ease or difficulty in making certain lines "register" while others did not. The actor of Iago has, under modern conditions, the almost intolerably difficult task of making clear the whole germ and basic root of the play during the first five minutes after the curtain rises, while the occupants of the orchestra seats are merrily trooping into them, with a

wealth of whispered colloquy with the ushers, their next-door-neighbours, and each other. This process used to go on until well into the Senate scene. Indeed, I sometimes felt, as I am sure Jose Ferrer did, even more acutely, that it would be better not to bother to play the first scene at all.

Macbeth, though equal to *Othello* in magnificence, is by no means of equal length. Scholars allege that the only text available to us, that of the Folio, had already been slashed about to an alarming degree as compared with what Shakespeare originally wrote. Their case is in part convincing, though I am by no means sure that the actors of Shakespeare's company were as inexpert or moronic as is generally assumed, nor that the author himself did not frequently concur in changes which the acid test of public performance imposed on his original script—the text which is habitually embodied in the "good" Quartos. I cut nothing, except the Hecate scene, universally thought to be an addition by another hand, and some solid hunks of the "England" scene between Malcolm and Macduff, which I stoutly maintain to be as great a bore as anything the Bard ever penned, and the totally irrelevant appearance of the English Doctor, with his implied flattery of King James I, a topic which time quickly rendered of no interest whatever.

In the interests of complete candour, I also confess to the cutting of Young Siward, for reasons which do not now seem to me altogether valid. Shakespearian battles are always a tough problem to the modern director, since actors today can seldom delight and thrill an audience with that display of expert and realistic swordsmanship on which, I feel sure, Shakespeare himself depended for his effect. Perhaps I remembered a little too vividly an all-too-easy crack from a member of the New York Critics' Circle about two gentlemen patting at each other with butter-knives. Perhaps I was more excusably conscious that the actor who plays Macbeth, at the end of two-and-a-half gruelling hours, during which his powers have been at full stretch, has to rally his physical forces for the fight with Macduff to which all the play's converging threads have led, and that this fight must be savage, merciless, tremendous. Perhaps I wanted to save for Mr. Evans the energy he would have had to expend on Young Siward. I lost a beautiful speech from Old Siward in

consequence, even though neither father nor son is a character of any particular interest to the audience.

I have not space in this article to delve further into my own Shakespearian past, as it concerns *Richard II* or *Henry IV, Part I*. The "uncut" *Hamlet* was, of course, just that, to my own great happiness. But perhaps I should say something of the production on which I am currently working, that of *Henry VIII*.* For if I have ever caused Mr. Shakespeare to turn in his grave, or will ever do so, this, I fear, is *the* moment. My justification and, let us hope, his comfort, lies in the fact that only a part of the play is considered to be his. Perhaps he laid down the general design of it; he wrote a bare half-dozen scenes. His collaborators, probably Fletcher, possibly Massinger, did the rest, and they are by no means to be taken lightly. Some of the best-known lines in the play are theirs. Some, too, are straight from the august personages who originally uttered them—as, for instance, Wolsey's famous "Had I but served my God as I have served my King, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies." When the Globe team of authors, not unlike the writers of a present-day movie studio, collaborated on this play, its events were no further from them than the Civil War is from us.

The play is full of splendid things, and has a long tradition of theatrical success. Its politics, however, as distinct from its great human appeal, are infinitely obscure to an American audience in 1946. I have tried to make this easier, though not without some misgiving as to my own temerity, by making the "Two Gentlemen" of the text into Two Narrators, who, in the capacity of a chorus, amplify the text with certain quotations from the chronicles of Holinshed, from which source the play stems very directly—and in parts almost verbatim. I have also thrown out completely, and in accord with theatre tradition fortified by common sense, the entire Gardiner-Cranmer subplot which clutters the end of the play after its two leading characters, Wolsey and Katherine, are dead. Whoever added this dull and involved sequence was, in my view, a very poor craftsman.

Two years ago Billy Rose was interested in doing this play,

* Produced by the American Repertory Company. Directors: Cheryl Crawford, Eva Le Gallienne, and Margaret Webster. International Theatre, New York, November 6, 1946.

at my suggestion. Now Mr. Rose is one of the expert impresarios of our generation. Whatever he says is worth listening to, even though it may shock you at the time. Indeed I used to think that Mr. Rose used shock-tactics deliberately, in order to jolt his colleagues out of complacency, or too easy satisfaction—out of taking anything for granted. When I once declared—as I firmly believe—that the final pattern of the play was summed up in the birth of a baby who was destined to become Queen Elizabeth of England, Mr. Rose demanded, "who in the world had ever heard of Queen Elizabeth, and what had she ever done anyway?" Such remarks as these forced me to turn on the obscurities of the text a more searching and merciless eye than I might otherwise have done. The recent Old Vic performances of *Henry IV, Parts I* and *II* have confirmed the ability of the political scenes in these chronicle plays to befuddle a modern audience, through no fault of the actors. I realise that Maurice Evans and I were more fortunate than we knew in that our *Richard II* was still fresh in the minds of audiences who saw our *Henry IV, Part I,* and served as a clear and human background.

Henry VIII, however, though historically by no means accurate, has less politics and more human emphasis than some of the earlier histories, as well as a glamour and richness which emphatically belong in our theatre. I am happy to be doing it in conjunction with other plays by Ibsen and Sheridan and Barrie and Shaw, to be doing it in repertory, under the auspices of the American Repertory Theatre. I hope that I have done no violence to the spirit and intention of its authors, despite my first experiment with major operations on the text. For it is my belief that the director should act as interpreter, the channel through which the author's thought and meaning flows to the actors and thence to the audience. I have not regarded every word of the texts as Holy Writ and I have tried to keep myself attuned to response and reception from the public. But I have not "played down," a process which would insult audiences as it would fatally damage the author. If I have offended Shakespearian scholars, as I am certain I must have done on numerous occasions, they have been extremely kind and forbearing with me. There are times when any choice of cuts is a bad one. I can only say that it has been honest.

BACKSTAGE, BIARRITZ

by

MORDECAI GORELIK

On September 3, 1945, we new arrivals staggered into Biarritz exhausted after a transatlantic flight and the long-drawn-out trip from Paris. Our reception consisted of still another round of paper work. It would have been sensible after that, to spend the afternoon resting. Instead I set out at once for the Casino Municipal, which was going to be my scene of action for the next seven months. On my way I discovered the charm of Biarritz, which is a place like the best of Hollywood seasoned in good French wine and set tumbling toward the Bay of Biscay.

The Casino Municipal turned out to be part of the crescent of great hotels and villas fronting the sea. Built in the Nineties, it had been remodeled in a cream-colored "modernist" style—a style already of the past, but stately and not without a certain glamor. It held an attractive little theatre with an old-fashioned raked stage; a large music hall; rehearsal rooms and offices; a vast baccarat salon now converted into a library for the GI's. Its basements were choked with scenery of the era of Sarah Bernhardt.

All in all, not a bad site for the American university theatre we were about to transplant to this foreign shore.

The shore was there literally. I met it that first day, and its memory is still vivid. The day was warm; the tricolor flapping overhead signalled that the water was peaceful; the sand was covered with OD blankets with American boys sprawling on them. . . . All through September that happy sight continued: GI's, rid of their uniforms, soaking up the sun; French soldiers doing the same; French girls; French grandmothers; French kids with beach pails and shovels, all jammed cozily together. Only the little section of the beach in front of the Casino was available for bathing. The rest was out of bounds and dangerous. German gun-emplacements, sunk deep inside the cliffs, still guarded the coastline, while off shore jagged heads of rock rose from the sea. A

rip tide swirled inland, looking for victims. . . . A fascinating, treacherous beach. Nobody had bothered to explain its ways to the Germans; local legend insists that twenty-four of the Herrenvolk lost their lives before the rest learned where it was safe to swim, and when.

Our first technical conference left me a little shaky. Lieutenant Colonel Albert McCleery, small and bursting with energy, had already launched four casts into rehearsal. Beginning with *The Front Page,* which would open in two weeks, the other shows were scheduled to follow a week apart. There was no workshop, not a hammer, not a nail, not a bolt of cloth or bucket of paint; nor would there be, I might add, until five days before the first opening. I couldn't say I had not been warned—McCleery had told me, back in Hollywood, "It's going to be rough."

I learned also that my experienced help would be limited to Sergeant Ralph McGoun, who had been technical director at Amherst, and Corporal Joe Shenker, whose civilian work had been displays and dioramas. As it turned out, however, these men were worth a battalion. Joe had already begun scouting out the local shops and offices with a view to getting things started. His scrounging ability—by which you may know the seasoned soldier—was well developed; it was he who annoyed the Motor Pool into lending us one of its precious jeeps. We needed that jeep badly for our errands.

You can't set up a theatre workshop in the Army without going through "channels." Shenker explained this patiently before we set out on our tour of offices—Engineers, Utilities, Special Services, Visual Aids, Ordnance, French Liaison. Everywhere our requirements cut across established procedure. We left sympathetic but puzzled Colonels and Majors behind us. After all, what could they be expected to do about problems such as a trick rolltop desk in which you can hide a man? But Joe refused to be discouraged.

"Talk right up to them," he'd say. "Rank counts—and you outrank them all. You're *Mister*!"

He was right. "Mister" proved to be the magic word, the open sesame, the rating of all ratings. I swear every man at BAU, from Brigadier General McCroskey to Buck Private Doaks, dreamed of becoming Mister.

We began to make progress. In Paris our supplies were being

rounded up from depots in France, Belgium, and Germany. McGoun was drafting blueprints of the Casino stage. He was also working on a dictionary of French-American stage terms, so we could communicate properly with the two French stagehands we had inherited. I searched through the debris of bombed houses and shops, looking for doors, windows, railings, and any other scenic elements that might come in handy on stage. Finally I located a whole dump of such material at the Centre Industriel, a municipal workshop just out of town. It took a Reverse Lend Lease operation to clear the way, but we "liberated" that material at last.

Meanwhile I made two great discoveries. One was a hoard of furniture and properties which had thoughtfully been collected for us by the German Army. We found a four-story garage full of articles requisitioned—or more accurately, stolen—by the Germans from the villas in the neighborhood. The American and French authorities had returned everything whose ownership could be determined, but there remained a heap of things without owners. We used what we could. I came across trunks rudely opened and obviously rifled; they still held family photos, souvenirs, schoolgirl diaries. Pitiful treasures; we left them reverently alone. My other discovery was the woodworking firm of J. Berniolles et Fils. One glance at that businesslike shop, one meeting with fine old M. Berniolles, and I knew we had an ally on whom we could rely. The shop's first order for the United States Government consisted of six imitation, old-style Chicago telephones.

As for costumes—Biarritz, Bayonne, and even Paris were scoured in vain for ordinary civilian men's suits. With dress rehearsal only a few days off the outlook became alarming. In the end a wardrobe of men's clothing, including hats, collars, and shoes, was flown from London. The suits were worth some $250 apiece at black market rates; we kept them securely under lock and key when not in use, but they had a way of disappearing little by little. Shoes, especially, walked out by themselves in the direction of places unknown. Months later we learned the fate of some of our Bond Street ensembles when the French police and our MP's rounded up a gang of young thieves in Bayonne.

We negotiated the use of two large rooms at the Casino for theatre and costume shops. Just in time, for now our supplies

were rolling in. Utilities sent its promised truckload of flat frames —frames made of soggy, undressed lumber, but usable. Army vehicles arrived from Paris, piled high with tools, paint, bolts of cloth, electric supplies—some from Special Services, but most of it captured German stock.

The liberated material was ample, if not especially suitable. We began turning Nazi uniform cloth into groundcloths, black-out material into masking, camouflage cloth into draperies. We found new uses for surgical gauze and German uniform buttons. . . . From the local Engineers' Depot came cello-glass and fir panels worth their weight in gold. Visual Aids helped out with posters, and pinch-hitted when Berniolles was crammed with orders. Later on, Graphic Arts, one of the other school departments, obliged with some of the papier-maché work. I want to point out, gratefully, that we established our place at the University only through the good will, co-operation, and indulgence of the rest of the Army.

The next few days were intense. Student members of the Stage Design and Production classes hastily donned their fatigues and set to work tacking canvas, sizing, and painting. More volunteers appeared from all parts of the University. German prisoners, with "PW" stencilled on their backs, built racks and stored materials under the watchful eyes of guards armed with carbines. On McGoun and his aide-de-camp, Keith Brings, fell the task of making American, British, and French lighting equipment work together in a sort of electrical UNO. Our work swamped the shop and flooded into the big terrace outside. We were happy to find that our French stage employees, one aged sixty-nine, the other seventy-two, not only knew their jobs but were as tireless as kids fifty years younger. These men, and a Basque carpenter we acquired later, were as good as the best anywhere. Richard Whorf arrived to direct *Richard III;* pending his rehearsals he jumped into overalls and led off with the painting.

A setting actually began to take form on stage. It grew into a suggestion of a dilapidated press room in Police Headquarters, Chicago. Technicians and actors in uniform wandered around in it raptly, as if rediscovering America. I ights began to pour in, and M. Victor, the Casino electrician, pondered the merits of a lighting system quite different from the French set-up of foots and borders. Now the time arrived for costume parade. And

startling that was, too, in a way. In this khaki-colored milieu nothing seemed more "costumey" than civilian dress. For days the boys couldn't get over their self-consciousness at finding themselves in suits, shirts, and colored ties. It was an exhilarating foretaste of being Mister.

On opening night we discovered the audience, or perhaps I should say we discovered the ideal audience. A public that tore the roof off with enthusiasm when we were good and that managed to remain cordial even when we were bad. And this in spite of the fact that it didn't pay for its seats. Have you ever sat in a "papered house" on Broadway? Enough said. . . . We agreed that nothing was too good for our audiences. Every one of us backstage was aware of the fellows out front; if we weren't always perfect it wasn't because we didn't bust ourselves trying.

Discovering the soldiers as an audience was only the beginning of discovering them as individuals, whether backstage, on the "campus," or in class. The middle-aged bombast of the veterans of War I was lacking in them. Maybe War II was a different kind of war; certainly its veterans as I saw them all around me were different. How I wish I could do justice to the charm of those boys and girls—the youth, the fun and zest, the seriousness, the complete, naïve modesty!

The newspapers report these days that some of our Occupation troops in Germany are behaving like rowdies; that they are listening to Nazi lies fed them by easygoing Fräuleins. Troops straight from bootcamp may be misled, perhaps. Not the combat men I knew at Biarritz. Nothing impressed the local French more than the high morale of our students. Majors and PFC's sat side by side in class; they called each other by their first names and drank at the same bars after hours. If there was any evidence of a caste system I must have been blind. We had many students who were foreign-born Americans; there were men and women of Negro, Mexican, Jewish, Chinese, and Japanese ancestry. If there was any racial tension I must have been deaf. Our GI's studied together as they had fought together at El Guettar, the Sicilian and Normandy beachheads, and the Battle of the Bulge.

That describes officers as well as men. The American Army, as I have observed it, is still a citizens' army, on guard against abuses of rank and with a natural tendency to judge each man strictly on his own merits. The BAU experiment was in the best

tradition of our armed forces: those boys plastered with rows of "fruit salad," decorations, battle stars, and citation badges, were living examples of American democracy, whether they came from Maine or Hawaii, Alabama or Alaska.

Maybe it was because everyone's thoughts were of home that we found a special meaning in simple interior sets like those for *You Can't Take It With You* or *The Male Animal*. I myself felt the need for bringing to our stage the genuine atmosphere of "Stateside" places. This required a struggle with French doors, windows, and furniture; it meant being fussy even about doorknobs, push buttons, and curtain poles. Everything American became exotic for us, with a new elusiveness. How does a U. S. pay-telephone look? We needed one for *The Time of Your Life,* and there wasn't even a picture to go by. Ditto, an American juke-box. We "cooked them up" only after a canvass of earnest recollections backstage. Was that sort of fuss worth-while? You'd have felt it was when you heard comments like, "Boy, that set takes me right back to San Francisco!"

With our workshop in running order and our first show on the boards, we rolled into high gear. First term: *The Front Page, You Can't Take It With You, The Time of Your Life, Boy Meets Girl.* Second term: *Winterset, The Male Animal, Dr. Knock, Richard III.* We acquired our quota of French, British, Canadian and Dutch students after the first semester. We also received our full quota of officers, including Captains Richard Baer and David McDearmon (co-ordinators); Captain Anthony Cefaratti (directing); Captain George Nash (supplies); Captain Robert Stevenson (costumes). In the academic section Dr. Hubert Heffner, administrator of the Theatre and Radio Arts Branch, was assisted by Captains William Boggess and David Hawes. We parted regretfully with McGoun and Shenker when it came time for them to go home; Mac's place was taken in the second term by Bill Goodhart and in the third by John Holman. We had additional standbys in Keith Brings and Charles Roesch. I enjoyed working with them all.

In October, Colonel McCleery's striking production of *The Time of Your Life* traveled northward at the invitation of the American Embassy to give Paris its first news of America as seen by Saroyan. In the second semester, Guthrie McClintic, working against time, reproduced on our stage his Broadway success,

Winterset. Richard III, a flamboyant version conceived and rehearsed by Dick Whorf, was completed by Baer and Stevenson when Whorf had to go back to his movie assignments. *Richard* afterwards went on a successful tour of the ETO. The University Theatre made history for me personally when it turned over to me as director part of *The Front Page* and all of *Dr. Knock.* In our final term we set a new high in production standards with *Gaslight, Hay Fever,* and *Volpone*—the last based on the promptbook of the Hollywood Actors' Laboratory Theatre.

Even with the amount of professional help I have mentioned, the production job was enormous. Our boys threw themselves eagerly into the work of scenic analysis, sketching, model-making, drafting, building, and lighting. They were escaping, for a while at least, from the drudgery of formations and the dullness of guard duty. Their devotion to their theatre jobs was touching. Many had never been backstage before and others had only the scrappiest notion of theatre practice. McGoun's successors, Goodhart and Holman, were bewildered when they first stepped on the stage; eight weeks later they were confidently taking charge of construction and rigging. They and their aides made mistakes, of course, but they went right on to correct their mistakes goodhumoredly and with patience. By and large our technicians were snafu-proof. The results were there in shows like *Volpone,* whose expertness I will stack up against the best in any large university or civic theatre back home. That goes, too, for the creations turned out by the costume people under the resourceful guidance of Bob Stevenson.

Our acting standards were equally high. Not that we didn't have amateurism in spots—but the playing in general was on a level that brought enthusiastic praise from the French critics, local or Parisian. Some of the kids who took part in our shows will be heard from again on Broadway and in Hollywood.

As might be expected, we had a shortage of actresses. The number of co-ed candidates was not large.With a student ratio of eighty men to one woman, who could blame Nurses and Wacs for hesitating to give all their evenings to rehearsal? Those who made the sacrifice were heartily welcomed. We found additional volunteers among the British secretaries who worked in the offices of the University; the talent of the British girls was undeniable even if their accents in American plays were not perfect to our

ears. The actress problem was fairly solved with the arrival of seven Civilian Actress Technicians—CATS for short—gifted, hard-working professional players, each one an example of the best type of American girl. Their names belong in this record: Lisa Blake, Irene Dula, Judith Jeffrey, Kristine Kenold, Eugénie Miller, Betty Ramey, and Elena Ryerson. . . .

Some random recollections: The dramatic life of Biarritz itself—a mixture of French provincial town, bathing resort, University and Army post. The Grande Plage; the epic violence of the sea crashing against the sullen rocks, boiling up to those appalling ramparts built by slave labor. The palatial hotels—the Miramar, the Carlton, the Palais—crammed with picturesque GI's. The "Arena Plays" given in the lobbies of the hotels. *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *The Night of January 16th* staged in the centre of absorbed audiences.

The temperamental electric current blotting out during one of the dizzier moments of *Boy Meets Girl.* The audience waiting, with the stolidity of troopers, for the show to go on again. The lights jump on fifteen minutes later.

On the stage the actor candidates line up in front of the table where the directors sit ready to hand out parts.

"What play would you like to be in?"

Soldiers snap to attention.

"*Richard,* sir!" or "*Winterset*!"

The Army—always on line for something.

The cast of *The Time of Your Life,* in the Metro Subway, giving an impromptu concert of Negro hymns—*Sweet Chariot, I'll Be Ready*—to the delight of Parisians.

The raw cold and rain of the southern winter—and no fuel. Audiences freezing in the theatre. Students freezing in class. The class itself taking refuge in the theatre sub-cellar, with the quite fantastic notion that it was warmer there.

GI's learning to sew brassières in Captain Stevenson's class. The stage crew, temporarily without a home, living in subterranean dressing rooms, sleeping in their sleeping bags.

The Basque Festival given under our auspices. Costumes like embroidered tennis clothes. Songs echoed by the wild clamor of the bagpipe.

A visiting cast from the Comédie Française, Paris, performs

for us. Comedy in formal style—strangely different from our own tradition.

Cast parties, enlivened by red Bordeaux wine and delicacies like raw onions. Who would have thought an onion could mean so much?

The German prisoners' own theatre—The Biarritz Bunte Bühne. A great hall, massed faces, sly or careworn. Actors' costumes with big "PW's" stamped on them.

Yes, the prisoners were a noteworthy, if not very brilliant, addition to the social scene of BAU. As a rule these former supermen worked mutely with brooms and mop-pails. Those six or seven who were assigned to the theatre were fortunate; they were anxious to please, grateful for the chance to recover almost forgotten skills as carpenters and tailors. Little unnecessary talk passed between us and them. I remember one talkative occasion, however.

Watching the Germans build a stage parallel on the set, that lanky Texan, John Holman, unbent:

"It's a good thing, ain't it, Wolfgang, that you boys are buildin' our scenery 'stead of us buildin' yourn? Kin you picture me walkin' down Unter den Linden with 'PW' on my backside an' little ol' Wolfgang trailin' behind me with a Mauser?"

When you've been a stage designer for a quarter of a century you normally have a warm spot in your heart for a good craftsman. These prisoners were good craftsmen. It might have been against regulations, but after each opening night our German assistants found themselves better off for cigarettes or beer. I speculated sometimes on what it would be like if I were working on "their" scenery instead of "ourn." Have you ever heard of a little town called Shchedrin? Very likely not. It was another Lidice, one of the many never even mentioned in the newspapers. My uncle, aunt and cousins lived there until the end came for them, as it did for all their neighbors. The Nazis buried three hundred people—men, women, and children—in the roadside ditches. I confess to a certain constraint in my dealings with our German crew. I think they liked me, but I don't care whether they did or not. . . .

On March 8, 1946, Biarritz American University officially closed. Truckload after truckload of troops rolled toward Biarritz-Negresse railway station on the way to their original units.

We had been assured that our last two productions, *Volpone* and *Hay Fever*, were urgently wanted to tour the ETO; I stayed five days longer to arrange for the purchase or reproduction of necessary properties and to advise on mechanical problems. Casts and stage crews of both shows waited for official word from USFET, Frankfurt. But the mills ground slowly, and as days passed without news the wait became an anxious one. Our own Troop Command laid down the law finally: at noon of March 13 the theatre personnel would be scattered to the four winds.

At noon of March 13 came a directive from Frankfurt to hold the theatre group intact. The shows would "hit the road." For at least two months the University Theatre, playing to GI audiences in Europe, would survive the University itself.

Not a few members of the company would be eligible, long before the end of the trip, to start the process of becoming Mister. They waived their right to go home before the end of the tour. Greater love for the theatre hath no man.

SOLDIER ENTERTAINMENT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

by

LEROY P. GRAF

"My Lord, the Players are come." With this familiar quotation, the editors of the *American Flag* heralded the advent of professional actors in Matamoros, Mexico, during July, 1846, two months after the city capitulated to Taylor's army.[1]

The brief visit of this company, occasional circuses, cockfights, equestrian performances, and amateur theatricals supplied what little entertainment was available to soldiers lucky enough to be in an important urban center behind the lines in the Mexican War. No nightly showing of the latest movies, no visits from traveling U. S. O. camp show units, no programs of local talent gathered by Theatre Advisors sent out by the Entertainment Section of the Special Service Division of the Army Service Forces eased the taut nerves of battle-weary soldiers or cheered the despondency of the wounded and sick. As we chronicle the meager entertainment fare of one group of our fighting ancestors, we are reminded that in this recent war "for the first time in American history the theatre has been treated as an integral part of the army set-up, as an essential in morale-building, education and recreation."[2] Soldiers in 1846 needed entertainment as desperately as soldiers in 1946, but a hundred years ago they had either to provide their own or to depend on the incentive of profits to persuade performers to journey near the battle fronts.

During the last months of 1845, while Taylor's forces, encamped at Corpus Christi Bay, were menacing the Mexicans on the Rio Grande, the soldiers under the direction of Lieutenant John B. Magruder built a theatre (probably largely of canvas) and began

[1] All references and quotations in this article which are not otherwise specifically annotated can be found in a two-year file (1846-1848) of the *American Flag* in the Newspaper Collection of the Library of Congress. The *American Flag* was an army newspaper published in Matamoros, Mexico, during the American occupation; a forerunner of the *Stars and Stripes*.

[2] Rosamond Gilder, "Theatre Overseas. The Entertainment Section Goes into Action," *Theatre Arts* (April 1944), Vol. XXVIII, p. 215.

to give plays.[3] Before long some professional actors joined the soldier amateurs. Soon the restless, bored troops were attending nightly performances at which they paid a dollar for box seats and half a dollar for the pit. A typical program consisted of Sheridan Knowles' *The Wife—a Tale of Mantua,* a dance by Mr. Wells, and the farce, *Loan of a Lover.* When Mr. Wells had a benefit he was assisted by two gentlemen amateurs, and the entertainment included two new pieces, a variety of singing, the popular dance of La Polka, and, because Mr. Wells was a dancer, a ballet pantomime entitled *The Duel or the Ambassador's Ball.* The company, in addition to Mr. Wells, consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Morris, and Mr. Edwards.[4]

The Army Theatre was so successful that C. G. Bryant early in 1846 built the Union Theatre, "a substantial and commodious theatre," which he leased to Messrs. Hart and Wells. It is not clear whether these gentlemen proposed to abandon the Army Theatre or to operate both enterprises with an "auxilliary [sic] force" which they expected would soon arrive. In front of the new theatre and connected with the boxes was a splendid saloon offering liquors, wines, fruits, and "segars." Patrons might pass from the saloon to a "commodious Refectory" serving at all hours of the day and night such delicacies as beef, venison, and turtle steaks, wild game, oysters, hot coffee and chocolate, turtle soup, and pastry. For the frequenters of the pit, the management provided a bar serving liquors and wine for cash during the hours of performances.[5] In this 1846 commercial version of a U. S. O. Club, the play was clearly an incidental attraction. It is little wonder that maintaining order was a perennial problem of theatre managers on the war front.

The actors did not go with the troops when they marched south early in the spring of 1846. After the battles of Palo Alto and Buena Vista, the Americans occupied Matamoros, the principal Mexican city in the lower Rio Grande Valley, and there found not only that they had time on their hands but also that the city had a serviceable theatre building. Offering "to sing the whole 'Western Songster' the first night, or play anything, from Jack the Giant Killer to Tom Thumb," a correspondent in the

[3] Samuel Gibbs French, *Two Wars: an Autobiography of General Samuel G. French* (Nashville, Tenn. 1901), p. 34.

[4] *Corpus Christi Gazette,* January 8, 1846.

[5] *Ibid.*

first issue of the American newspaper urged that the amateur thespians organize and make use of this "good substantial theatre" in Matamoros.[6] The amateurs did not respond to the suggestion.

Throughout June and half of July, soldiers and civilians in Matamoros subsisted on a sparse entertainment diet of occasional Grand Dress and Fandango Balls, tightrope and tumbling performances, and a violin concert. Report that the concert by Master St. Luke was not very well attended reminds us that all these attractions depended for success on civilian as well as military patronage. So long as there was any question as to the orderliness of the audience, the Mexican residents of Matamoros refused to bring their ladies. The tightrope and tumbling performances were given by Peter Carrera in his Olympic Arena, an outdoor ring where the audience witnessed not only tightrope exhibitions but also theatrical extravaganzas, Spanish boleros, and *cachucas*.[7] G. W. Kendall, the special correspondent of the New Orleans *Daily Picayune,* attended one of these performances and pronounced it "wretched," although he admitted the audience was of a fairly respectable size. He seems to have been most depressed by the orchestra, which consisted of a bass drum, a tenor drum, four bass clarionets, and a huge tin instrument, "a cross of the bugle and ophiclyde, with a small sprinkling of the hautboy."[8] Kendall had earlier observed that Matamoros afforded a "rare chance for a theatrical or some speculation of the kind," although he confessed that the demand might not be long lived. In the meantime, the gambling rooms, bar rooms, restaurants, etc., were picking up the surplus change in the city.[9]

The theatrical vacuum which Kendall noted did not last long. In mid-July Mr. and Mrs. Hart, who had regaled the troops at Corpus Christi with dramatic fare, arrived in Matamoros with a company of seven ladies and four men. The editors of the *American Flag* welcomed the new company with this fitting paraphrase:

> We assure our friends that the people of this place will see "the actors well bestowed," and never let them open to "a beggarly account of empty boxes." They are the "brief chronicle of the times," and should be treated "better than they deserve."

[6] *Republic of the Rio Grande,* June 6, 1846.

[7] *Ibid.,* June 16, 1846.

[8] New Orleans *Daily Picayune,* July 18, 1846. He remarked that he had "not got over that instrument yet, after a good night's sleep."

[9] *Ibid.,* July 8, 1846.

Apparently a tight housing situation in militarily congested Matamoros complicated the "well-bestowing" of the company,[10] and the confusion of wartime transportation obliged them to play their first performances without scenery or their full wardrobe when the steamer *Virginia* took these items up the river to Camargo. Yet, despite these inconveniences, the company rose to the challenge of trouping and on July 20, the day after their arrival in Matamoros, presented the *Maid of Munster* and *Swiss Girl* to a crowded house.

Mrs. Hart, the manager's wife, was the star of the company. The *American Flag* observed that she had "long been a favorite with the army" and that her "admirers muster strong about Matamoros at this time. She has great versatility of talent and knows well how to please the public taste," being at home both in tragedy and in comedy. Press comments on her performances were usually favorable, and on occasion enthusiastic. In the company's first Matamoros appearance, she "brought down thunders of applause . . . and her acting throughout the whole performance showed that she had by no means lost any of her former pleasing originality and beautiful conception of character." Later it was said that she "would be a favorite on the boards of any theatre, for she is not only a reader of much merit, but has a fine conception of character and possesses sufficient powers to delineate it." As the wife of the manager, and apparently also because of her talent and charm, she drew the leading roles and much of the contemporary spotlight. But for later generations three other members of the company are much more significant. These are Joseph Jefferson, his sister Cornelia, and his mother.

We have long known that Joseph Jefferson, the inimitable Rip Van Winkle of the second half of the Nineteenth Century, belonged to a group of actors who gave performances in Matamoros during the American occupation. The extent of our information has been limited to the account Jefferson gives us in his autobiography and to the scattered brief references in published reminiscences of soldiers. Now the *American Flag* provides much new material, many corrections, and in general a more compre-

[10] The roster of the company listed the following: Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Jefferson, Mrs. Irwin, Miss Jefferson, Miss Christian, Miss Bradley, Miss Irwin, Messrs. Hart, Jefferson, Wells, and Smith. There is no evidence that Mrs. Jefferson ever played in Matamoros. Mr. Wells did not join the company until August 6. After the first week, a Mr. Fanning appeared prominently in the casts. Edward Badger was a comedian in the company, but he was never mentioned in notices.

hensive picture of dramatic activities at Matamoros including Jefferson's dramatic efforts there.

We do not know where Mr. and Mrs. Hart and Mr. Wells were between the first months of 1846 when they played in Corpus Christi and July when they first appeared in Matamoros, but we may infer that when the army marched south, they abandoned Corpus Christi and betook themselves to the nearest sizeable population, the Texas cities of Houston and Galveston. For it was in Galveston that Joseph Jefferson, aged seventeen, and his sister Cornelia, eleven, were acting in a profit-sharing company, evidently Hart's, when war was declared in May.[11] Since the death of his actor father in Mobile in 1842, Jefferson, his mother, and little sister had barnstormed over Tennessee and Mississippi and had played in New Orleans before going to Texas.

According to Jefferson's *Autobiography* written forty years later, the company in which he and Cornelia were appearing boarded a condemned Mississippi River steamer and arrived at Point Isabel in time to hear the guns of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. Moving into Matamoros on the heels of Taylor's forces, they at once set up shop in the Old Spanish Theatre.[12]

The evidence of the *American Flag* obliges us to abandon this picturesque story in favor of the more accurate report that the Jeffersons and the Harts reached Matamoros a safe two months after the occupation, although that they sailed from Galveston to the Rio Grande in a leaky old river steamer is probably only too true.

Yet it would be unfair to deny to these actors their meed of courage, even though it was not courage in the face of the gunfire of battle. Life in the overcrowded, unhealthy, hot city was not attractive. In fact, the heat was so great that the company suspended performances during the last half of August. Drunken, disorderly audiences of soldiers and the riffraff which follows in the wake of an army were likely to pay little attention to the performances and from time to time interrupted them by brawls which endangered not only audience but actors as well.[13] Mr. Hart took the precaution of having a detachment of the regular guard on hand to preserve order in his theatre, and according to

[11] Joseph Jefferson, *Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson* (New York 1889), p. 65.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

[13] John Reese Kenly, *Memoirs of a Maryland Volunteer. War with Mexico in the Years* 1846-7-8 (Philadelphia 1873), p. 53; Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

the *American Flag* was quite successful.[14] He was not, however, able to escape the almost inevitable robbery to which theatre managers on the frontier seemed doomed. During the second week of the engagement, a thief reached through the ticket window and made off with the handkerchief on which the evening's receipts were being counted. The money was not recovered and the editors of the *American Flag* suggested that the people of Matamoros make up the loss by increased attendance at the theatre.

In the notice given to the first performance the only performers singled out for individual mention were Mrs. Hart, who played the leading roles, and the two Jeffersons. It reads:

> Mr. Jefferson is at home no where else than on the stage, and creditably maintains the character of an ancient theatrical family. Of Miss Jefferson we could not say too much in praise, and for fear we should say too little, (our space being limited) we shall defer expressing our admiration until we can afford more room.

Lack of space was also the excuse for not mentioning other performers; so we may assume that Joseph, at least, was singled out for this honor less because of his performance than because of his lineage. Later, on the occasion of Jefferson's benefit, he, his talent, and his family were described with the following trilingual enthusiasm:

> He is a young gentleman of much promise as a low comedian, can tell a Yankee story with inimitable humor, and the way he dances in his wooden shoes is a caution to corns and cockroaches. But everybody knows that the Jefferson family from the old man down to "la Senorita Jefferson" who is such a favorite here, are perfectly *au fait* in anything they undertake.

Joseph, although popular, was distinctly overshadowed by the "little Miss Jefferson," the "observed of all observers." For her, both press and audiences reserved their greatest enthusiasm. As the title character in the farce of *The Spoiled Child,* she captivated her audiences, but above all she won their vociferous approval in her before-the-curtain dances and songs. She was regularly one of the two members of the company listed in the advertising to

[14] "We are satisfied that when the public become aware of the quiet and respectable manner in which things are conducted by the management the citizens will turn out in large numbers."

appear between the evening's plays in songs and dances. Her dances so delighted a writer for the *American Flag* that he regretted he did not have a hat full of half dollars to throw to her whenever she danced. Earlier it was said that "Little Miss Jefferson nightly adds to the number of her admirers. She is a charming little girl and is *the* attraction of the company." At the end of the third week of performances no more could be said than "of Miss Jefferson we need not speak; she does everything well."

The only other individual performer to be favored with "rave" notices was an amateur, a Mr. Edwards (Is he the same Edwards who played with the Harts in Corpus Christi?), who joined the company in the third week of its run to appear as the hero in two of the classical melodramas: as Claude Melnotte in Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons,* and as St. Pierre in Knowles' *The Wife.* Explaining that amateur performances had become so common (and possibly so bad) in recent years that he no longer regarded them with special interest, the editor of the *American Flag,* who did not arrive at the theatre until near the end of the second act of *The Lady of Lyons,* wrote of Edwards' performance:

> As soon as we entered the house we were convinced that the character of Claude was in no ordinary hands, but was being portrayed by a man of mind and decided understanding. His actions and jestures [*sic*] had everything of the finish about them and he "walked the boards" with the ease and elegance of an old stager. The reading of the part was executed in a masterly style, and some of the most impassioned passages were admirably given.

Several evenings later, Edwards undertook the role of St. Pierre in which he was "very good, if any thing, better than in Claude Melnotte."

Other members of the company received varying degrees of praise for their work, and on occasion were taken to task for their deficiencies. After the first performance of *Jane Shore,* it was tartly observed that "the gentleman who was cast for Gloster should study a little more, for his imperfections threw the only impediment in the way of the piece, which, otherwise, would have glided smoothly off." Mr. Fanning was gently put in his place by the comment that he, "in his peculiar line, is a deserving actor, and, with application to the profession alone, will overstep mediocrity." Possibly as a result of the scarcity of men in the company,

Miss Bradley early in the engagement played masculine roles. The *American Flag* disapproved of this practice, and the following week Mr. Hart assigned her to "female characters" which she "delineated in a style to reflect much credit" on her. When Miss Christian made her first appearance with the company, she was appraised as an inexperienced player who showed promise, but "in the farce she did not mark her face enough and looked too young in Miss Pickle for effect."

Even the favorites did not escape unfavorable comment. Miss Jefferson did not sing loudly enough; she and Miss Christian, although improving in their dancing, must continue to "exert themselves"; Mrs. Hart had done her role "passably well," but it was "by no means such a delineation as we anticipated and know her capable of giving." As a whole, the performances were probably as good as the average touring stock company of those years.

Until mid-August when the weather evidently became oppressively hot, the theatre was relatively comfortable, at least "as comfortable as any place in doors in the city." The seats in the pit or parquette were rather close together but otherwise were "well arranged." The orchestra, in large part made up of musicians in the band of the Second Dragoons, was a particular attraction—"indeed some pieces of music were executed in a style that would reflect honor upon an establishment of higher pretensions."

Although the repertory was chosen with an eye to an audience whose attention was subject to ready diversion, the bills differed little from those offered in the contemporary urban theatres of the North.[15] The staple of the repertory was standard plays of English origin, with *The Lady of Lyons* enjoying its usual high favor. *Jane Shore, The Wife,* Farrell's *Dumb Girl of Genoa* and Jerrold's *Black-eyed Susan* were the other mainstays of the serious drama. Excepting *Jane Shore,* which first appeared in 1713, these plays had all been introduced to English audiences within the previous twenty-five years. The newest of them was *The Lady of Lyons,* not yet a decade on the boards. Shakespeare was performed only once, and then in a style and with results to discourage repetition.

During the second week of the run, the manager announced

[15] *Cf.* George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York 1931), Vol. V (1843-1850), *passim;* Nelle Smither, "A History of the English Theatre at New Orleans, 1806-1842," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly,* Vol. XXVIII, pp. 85-276 and 361-572.

a performance of *Richard III* with two colonels as guest performers. Colonel Jack Haynes would play Richard and Colonel Jack Mills was to dance between the pieces. When Mills got cold feet and failed to appear, Miss Jefferson substituted with a *cracovienne* (a lively polonaise). Haynes, however, appeared and "portrayed the hump back tyrant in a startling manner," according to the sympathetic, yet evasively honest, *American Flag*. Kendall of the *Picayune* in a frank, and probably more accurate, report described Haynes's performance as "killing the character."[16] An aftermath of the occasion, we hope not a variety of dramatic criticism, was the murder of Colonel Haynes the next morning. It is little wonder that Mr. Hart and company made no other attempts to do Shakespeare.

As one would expect, comedies and farces were very popular. We have noted that Bickerstaff's *The Spoiled Child* was an ideal vehicle for Cornelia Jefferson. For his benefit, Joseph Jefferson selected Tobin's comedy, *The Honey Moon;* while Mr. Wells, a dancer and comedian, chose a double dose of comedy for his opening bill with the company: George Sloane's *The Young Reefer; or the Midshipman on Shore* and John Howard Payne's *'Twas I,* an adaptation of a French farce. The latter of these is described by Allardyce Nicoll as an "operatic farce" reminding us that many of these lighter pieces were plays in which music and dancing were an integral part. Only one of the twenty plays in the company's repertory was by an American author: Samuel Woodworth's comedy, *The Forest Rose; or American Farmers,* which had received its first performance at the Chatham Garden Theatre in New York in 1825.[17] In addition to those already mentioned, the Hart company performed the following comedies or farces in Matamoros: Allingham's *The Weather-cock;* Ayton's *The Rendezvous;* Dimond's *The Lady and the Devil;* Hoare's *No Song No Supper;* J. R. Planché's *Dumb Belle;* and, by unknown authors, *The Barkeeper's Bride* and *The Spanish Lovers.*

The season of legitimate drama so welcomed by the *American Flag* came to an end less than a month after it began. The great heat of the last half of August, which probably made the theatre unbearable, Hart's illness, and the removal of the troops inland toward Monterey all contributed to stilling Thespis. As in the

[16] New Orleans *Daily Picayune,* August 16, 1846.

[17] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama* (New York 1923), p. 447.

story of the company's arrival in the Rio Grande country, so in the account of its departure, new evidence contradicts Jefferson's highly seasoned version of an absconding manager who left him, his mother and sister, penniless in a strange land.[18]

Actually, after two weeks of scorching weather, Hart attempted to reopen with a series of vaudevilles, presumably capitalizing on the talents of his wife, Miss Jefferson, and Mr. Wells in particular. Despite the attraction of free admission for women, this experiment failed because of the diminished military population, and Hart began to look around for the nearest likely audience. Rather than follow the troops on their march inland, a hazardous venture at best, he turned his attention to the Gulf settlements through which passed troops and supplies moving in and out of northern Mexico. At such a location, either at Point Isabel on the mainland, or at Brazos de Santiago on Brazos Island, he could find not only an audience but also information about sailings to more promising stands. Late in September, with the same company, Hart opened a theatre at Point Isabel. By the end of October he had moved across the bay to Brazos Island where the *American Flag* reported "our theatrical company are doing up the legitimate . . . and to pretty good houses, too."[19]

In vain did the editors of the *American Flag* express the hope that Hart and Company would not forget Matamoros during the coming winter. Late in the spring of 1847 report reached Matamoros through newspaper exchanges that the company had commenced a season in Jalapa. Even the players reflected the fact that General Taylor's star had set and General Scott's was in the ascendant. W. R. Hart was fulfilling the prophecy made by the *American Flag* while the troupe was at Point Isabel: "Hart is a pushing man and will have, as he deserves, the name of Pioneer of the Drama in Mexico—at least the American Drama."

Jefferson did not leave Matamoros with the Harts. During the hot weather in August, he and Edward Badger, another comedian, joined forces to open a cigar stand in Foyle's Lunch

[18] Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

[19] From one glimpse we have of the company on Brazos Island, it appears that they offered at least two farces not performed in Matamoros. One was Rodwell's *The Young Widow*, and the other Butler's *The Irish Tutor*, both offered on November 9. "Two or three of the characters were tolerably well sustained, and one of the mess remarked, 'It is as good a theatre as I want to go to.'" B. F. Scribner, *Camp Life of a Volunteer, a Campaign in Mexico, or a Glimpse at Life in Camp* (Philadelphia 1847), p. 38.

House, a prominent eating and drinking establishment. Here they offered to "Those of our friends who are fond of luxuries . . . segars of the best quality" and "good chewing tobacco always on hand, ready for use." In Jefferson's *Autobiography* this venture becomes a coffee and cake stand in "The Grand Spanish Saloon." a place in which violence was an everyday occurrence and where part of the contract for the stand provided that if either Badger or Jefferson were killed by an employee of the owner, the employee would be discharged at once.[20] Is this detailed and dramatic picture of life in the rough the exaggeration of an old actor? Or were the partners engaged in two ventures, the one in tobacco and the other in food? Evidence of the colorful cakes and coffee venture exists only in the actor's fallible memory, while the contemporary printed page bears double witness, both in editorial comment and in advertising, to the tobacco enterprise. Whether his mother and sister were with Jefferson during this commercial venture, or when he left Matamoros, we do not know; but it is clear that when he did leave the Rio Grande, he chose to return to New Orleans rather than troupe further for the armed forces.[21]

With Hart's departure, the entertainment scene in Matamoros reverted to its earlier nondescript character. During the summer, while Hart was still in the city, La Compañia del Norte, a company of Mexican players, had been giving performances, but they were evidently little competition for the Americans, since on the one occasion when the native artists joined forces with the Americans (for Mr. Hart's benefit), the Mexican comedy was dismissed as having "But one redeeming point, and that was its brevity—occupying but some 10 or 12 minutes." The elementary nature of this comedy may be seen in the following description from the same review:

> From what we could understand of it, a man had an unruly wife—a sort of shrew—and she gave him much uneasiness. A friend called on him and suggested a remedy—a whip—which he promised to apply the first opportunity. Presently the heroine came in. the husband hit her three or four times, she repented, fell on her knees and the curtain fell on all.

[20] Jefferson, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-77; Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America . . .* (Philadelphia 1919), Vol. II, p. 110.

[21] Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 78. Typical of the romanticized picture of Jefferson's war experiences is Strang's statement that "During the Mexican War he [Jefferson] shared the fortunes of General Taylor's army, acting wherever night found him, and selling coffee and cakes to the soldiers during the day." Lewis C. Strang, *Famous Actors of the Day in America* (Boston 1900), p. 13.

Cockfights and fandangos resumed their place as the sole entertainment available to citizens and soldiers until January, 1847, when the American Circus Company managed by Mr. J. Bensley arrived from an engagement of several months in Monterey.[22] The company established its animal exhibits where the cockfights had been held. Here one might see a lion, an African leopard, and performances of Chinese monkeys for twenty-five cents. The main performance of the circus, often referred to as the Equestrian Company, went on in an amphitheatre set up on the north side of the main plaza. The following comment gives us a glimpse of the type of entertainment offered:

> Mr. Kelly, as a rider, and at sleight-of-hand, would be hard to beat in any country; Mulligan, as a vaulter, is not to be surpassed, and Hambin, at Herculean feats of strength, "posturing," etc., has no superior . . . As for the clown, Greeley—not Horace—he will pass.

For a month and a half the circus drew large audiences. But early in March, as the result of rumors of an imminent invasion by a Mexican force now that most of the American troops were either at Monterey or farther south in Tamaulipas, the Mexican residents in large numbers abandoned the city for a new settlement two days' journey to the south, and many Americans selected this time to return to the "States." Lacking an audience, the circus moved on, to be replaced during the following month by a "little company" which offered acting, violin playing, and singing. This nameless group at first struck it lucky, for during these weeks the authorities were forbidding fandangos. The *American Flag*, trying to console its readers, advised them that, "Strange as it may sound, fandangos 'are nothing' to the fun this little company nightly produces." Unfortunately, the city had entered into a period of economic slump. Few people were in town and none were coming in, for to add to the gloom, the river was so low that all the boats were grounded. Under these conditions, entertainment projects were not likely to prosper, and the "little company" disappeared as unobtrusively as it had come.

The amateur actors of Matamoros now bestirred themselves to make use of the untenanted Matamoros Theatre. In mid-May,

[22] William Seaton Henry, *Campaign Sketches of the War with Mexico* (New York 1847), p. 254. Henry mentions seeing a circus, evidently this one, in Monterey. He thought Hamblin (Hambin?) was the manager. The company which had been in Mexico about four years took native horses and broke them to the ring.

a "society of gentlemen," calling themselves the Matamoros Dramatic Association, announced that they were eager "to engage the services" of two or three young ladies "to assist in performances." The ladies need not be experienced actresses as they would be fully directed. The Association renovated the theatre, among other improvements making an entrance in the front of the building and arranging boxes so that gentlemen and their friends and family might see the performances "perfectly secluded—not being subject to intrusion from others."

On May 30, the double bill of *The Idiot Witness* and *The Omnibus* opened the remodeled theatre. A Miss Courtney, who "has won applause upon the boards of many of the principal theatres of the United States, and attained a high rank in her profession," was the only professional in the cast, although the backers hoped to induce more actors and actresses to come on from New Orleans. It was implied that the other ladies, amateurs all, had been eager to take advantage of this opportunity to learn the art of acting from Miss Courtney, who had been hired "at considerable expense." Unfortunately for the enterprise, Miss Courtney, although attractive, could not compensate for the company's overwhelmingly inept performance. The *American Flag,* searching for the right mixture of truth and kindness, noted that the "prompting was beautiful and the stabbing and falling in perfect taste." It had not been an entirely profitless occasion since "the risibles of the audience" had been excited "to healthful exercise."

The Matamoros Dramatic Association succumbed after a few performances, and entertainment seekers turned their undivided attention to the Equestrian Company which had arrived shortly before the amateurs tried their wings. This company, now described as a Mexican company, was managed by the Mr. Mulligan who had been in Bensley's Circus. Again the sawdust ring prospered above the theatrical boards, and for a month before moving to New Orleans the company regaled the citizens of Matamoros with "a display of equestrian feats such as in their wildest imaginings they never dreamed of."

By now Matamoros was distinctly in the backwash of the war and there was little incentive to provide entertainment. Young Master St. Luke, now grown to be Mr. St. Luke, returned from

war service as a Texas Ranger to give a concert at the Exchange Hotel in December. The month before, Joe D. Rice appeared at the theatre as William Tell and gave his imitations of distinguished performers including his Negro recitation of Billy Phillips, for which he was evidently famous. It is not clear whether his William Tell was a monologue or whether it was a regular play. A supporting company might have been available if the project of J. B. Johnson and J. Freeman back in September to reopen the Matamoros Theatre had been carried through. The local paper, having mentioned the prospective reopening of the theatre, made no further reference to it.

Whatever the extent of the dramatic effort in the fall of 1847, it could not have produced very satisfactory results; for in January, 1848, the editors of the *American Flag* were apologizing to Messrs. Tanner and Lundy, managers of a troupe of tightrope performers, for the cool reception they had received from that journal. They said:

> We had been so often imposed upon by humbugs, and been made to blush for recommending them favorably to the public, that a resolution was formed never again to make favorable mention of any set of performers, without first convincing ourselves that they deserved it.

Here at last was a performance worthy of the enthusiasm the editors had to bestow.

The company, numbering twelve or fourteen persons, most of them Mexican, had been performing at military posts between Matamoros and Saltillo.[28] Their show, about which the *American Flag* raved, consisted of "dancing and other feats on the tightrope, vaulting, posturing, exhibitions of strength and agility, and all such feats as characterize the exhibitions of the Ravel family who have acquired such celebrity in the United States." These performers, insisted the *American Flag*, excelled the Ravels and the famous Herr Cline! Performing in the theatre to crowded houses for several weeks, the company in mid-February moved outside into a pavilion where from one thousand to fifteen hundred people could be accommodated under the canopy. Here, in March,

[28] On the company's way from the interior to Camargo, on the upper river, they had assisted in defending a pack train against Mexican attack. The report of the incident mentions the following Americans, all, we assume, members of the company: Messrs. Tanner, Lundy, D. McDonald, J. McDonald, Miller, and John Tanner, a boy about twelve years old. Other members of the company mentioned by name were Don Caferino Jaques and Doña Maria Carpia.

the managers inaugurated a series of Sunday bullfights, the first in Matamoros since the war began. Apparently, of all the entertainment troupes to play Matamoros during the war, this company of tightrope performers, whose show resembled a circus, enjoyed the greatest popular success, attracting both men and women, Mexicans and Americans.

With the end of the war, the new city of Brownsville on the American side of the Rio Grande became the feeble outpost of the muse in that valley. Here in due time a local amateur group attempted to establish itself, but without success, for the departure of the soldiers had deprived the theatre of its potential audience. The American population left in the lower Rio Grande country was small, and many of them were hard-headed business men who had no taste for theatricals. In their search for relaxation, they joined the natives in gambling, cockfights, and fandangos.

Just as in the recent war the part played by legitimate dramatic offerings such as Katharine Cornell's *Barretts of Wimpole Street,* Evans and Anderson's *Macbeth,* and even companies of *Boy Meets Girl, Junior Miss, etc.,* is insignificant compared with the various variety shows whether headed by movie and radio figures or by old troupers and local army talent; so in the Mexican War the legitimate theatre of the Harts entertained far fewer soldiers and civilians than did the circus type of show. But in 1846 the play-actors were in the vanguard of entertainers. They, like their descendants, offered a repertory which compared favorably with the contemporary bills of companies in the United States. Nor did they confine their activities to Matamoros. They followed the troops, and incidentally the source of box office receipts, even into central Mexico. Although motivated by private gain, these players were worthy forerunners of today's world-wide U. S. O. Camp Shows.

DYKWYNKYN OF OLD DRURY

by

WILLIAM VAN LENNEP

On Boxing Night, December 27, 1852, Old Drury which had been dark for some weeks, reopened its doors to a boisterous and expectant crowd. The attractions offered there that night by E. T. Smith, the new manager,[1] were many—a new company, new scenery and stage effects, new and lower prices, a new adaptation by Edward Fitzball of the popular *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* and, above all, a new "Grand, Poetical, Historical, Operatical, Dramatical, Anachronismatical" Christmas pantomime, *Harlequin Hudibras; or, Old Dame Durden and the Droll Days of the Merry Monarch,* written by Edward Litt Leman Blanchard and starring the "inimitable" clown, Tom Matthews. The previous Christmas, Matthews had delighted large audiences at Smith's Marylebone Theatre in another of Blanchard's pantomimes, *John Barleycorn; or, The Fairies of the Hop and the Vine,* and Smith was seeking to repeat this success at Drury Lane.

Blanchard had fallen in love with pantomime very early in life. As a child he had been taken to Covent Garden to see the great Harlequin, Ellar, go through his celebrated transformation, and for years thereafter, he could always be persuaded to go to bed by his mother's command, "Change into Harlequin," whereupon he would strip off his clothes, and jump through the curtains of his cot.[2] While still in his teens he had written, produced, and performed in three pantomimes, and by 1852, at the age of thirty-two years, he had seen more than twelve of his pantomimes on

[1] At the time that Edward Tyrrell Smith leased Drury Lane, the theatre had been in the market for some time and was considered such a bad speculation that the ground lessee, the Duke of Bedford, had thought of pulling it down. Smith had taken Drury Lane for seven years at the reduced rental of £3500 (formerly £10,000). Like Alfred Bunn, an earlier manager, he was a showman. In 1853, he opened his second season with an American named Sands who amazed people by crawling on the ceiling, head downwards, like a fly. The trick was done by means of special shoes containing sockets in the soles that slipped into clasps on the ceiling. For further information about Smith and his ten-year management of Old Drury, see Edward Stirling's *Old Drury Lane* (London 1881), Vol. I, pp. 249-272; H. Barton Baker's *The London Stage* (London 1889), Vol. I, pp. 114 and 115; and *The Life and Reminiscences of E. L. Blanchard,* edited by Clement Scott and Cecil Howard (London 1891), Vol. II, p. 472 n.

[2] E. L. Blanchard, "Some Memories of a Harlequin," *Theatre Annual* for 1884, p. 23.

the professional stage. On this Boxing Night, in addition to *Harlequin Hudibras* at Drury Lane, his pantomimes were being given at the Marylebone, Sadler's Wells, and Surrey theatres.

Harlequin Hudibras ran a month, and, together with the Sadler's Wells pantomime of *Whittington and his Cat,* it established Blanchard as the leading writer of this genre in London. During the next thirty-six years, from 1852 to 1888, Old Drury came to be regarded as the national home of pantomime, and the excellence of the annual Christmas piece there was due to Blanchard, its author, and to his collaborators, William Beverley and Richard Wynne Keene, who designed the scenery and costumes respectively.

Keene, "the famous 'Dykwynkyn' of the Drury Lane pantomimes," as Blanchard called him,[3] was born in Norwich in 1811 and died in London on November 28, 1887. After inventing Keene's Cement and suffering heavy losses in marketing it, he turned to designing and modeling the masks and properties for theatrical spectacles. From 1852 until 1880, when his health failed, Keene executed the costumes and masks for all the Drury Lane pantomimes. In the Harvard Theatre Collection is a folio volume of his original drawings for *Harlequin Hudibras,* consisting of water colors, and sketches in pen-and-ink and pencil. These drawings, particularly the more finished water colors, are distinguished by originality and humor. All of them are reproduced here in black and white, and their charm is, I think, apparent.[4] In fact, they are the reason for this article.

Now to the opening night of *Harlequin Hudibras.*

Long before the curtain rises Old Drury's huge auditorium, seating 3600, is filled from pit to highest gallery. Among those present is, of course, *The Times* reviewer, who is busy composing his report for tomorrow's paper: "The pit was crammed to suffocation. Those who abode in the boxes were evidently distressed with the heat, and how those fared who occupied the topmost seats is very difficult to understand and very unpleasant to imagine. Men in shirt sleeves, women with their bonnets half off,

[3] *The Life and Reminiscences of E. L. Blanchard,* Vol. II, p. 612.

[4] One of the most delightful of these drawings has been used as the frontispiece to this issue.



faces ripe for mischief, and the usual complement of those unearthly tones which a Christmas audience seems bound to utter, occupied the interval between the filling of the house and the rising of the curtain. Oranges, too, were eaten . . . and the skins flung upon the heads of the persons in the pit, who sought to return the courtesy, but their performances falling short of their intentions, the occupants of the boxes came in for a share of wet orange peel. Standing-up fights there were, too, among the occupants of the upper regions, to the signal interest of all those who were lucky enough to get a sight of the combatants. But, on the whole," continues *The Times* reviewer, probably with his tongue in his cheek, "the audience behaved very decently for a Christmas audience."

At last the performance begins. The spectators are in no mood

for the sentimentalities of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and greet even its most lachrymose moments with laughter. They are here to see the pantomime. Fitzball's crude piece ends; the curtain shortly rises upon a blaze of blue light, and the audience finds itself in the presence of Antiquity, a gray-haired old man (Mr. Winter) in a purple gown, surrounded by his attendants—Rust, Mildew, Cobweb, and Moth. The Abode of Antiquity is a sort of grotesque curiosity shop, littered with armor, pairs of knee breeches, street lamps, a mail coach, a horoscope dated 1666, and figures of Gog, Magog, and Guy Fawkes. As Antiquity is chortling over the prospect of adding Blackfriars Bridge and Smithfield to his collection, the Genius of Improvement, a young lady (Miss Bromley) in a yellow-spangled dress, appears in her fairy car of progress drawn by two winged steeds, the reins resembling telegraph wires. The two speak:

IMPROVEMENT:

I'm full of glorious projects for the people.
The working man shall find me raise his station,
I'll give him health—his children education.
Link the whole world in one vast railway chain,
Till wiser grown, men never war again.

ANTIQUITY:

I'faith, with so much coming it were wise,
To enlarge these premises to twice their size.
But say what is it brings you here this time?

IMPROVEMENT:

I want a subject for a pantomime.
That is a good old custom every year,
With which I never want to interfere—
One, for our children's sakes, we could not spare.

ANTIQUITY:

But then your treatment of me isn't fair.
Where are my Fairy Tales? Gone every one of them.
Don't you take kings from history, and make fun of 'em?
Don't you at Christmas turn my facts to jest?

IMPROVEMENT:

That's now the way we understand them best.
But come my fairy land you here shall see,
The Fairy Land of Eighteen fifty-three;
Behold a region where all gain admission,
The Crystal Palace—new and improved edition.



At a wave of her wand, Antiquity's shop sinks beneath the stage, and in its place rises the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, bathed in moonlight, with fountains playing at its base and dancers dressed as fairies reclining here and there. They rise and dance a "grand ballet fantastique," illustrating the union of the arts and sciences. Antiquity is so impressed that he offers to join Improvement in producing a pantomime "embracing the genial merriment of the past and the smart allusions of the present."[5]

The scene now changes to the Village of Sumware by sunrise, showing Dame Durden's farm. As in the old song, Dame Durden (*Mr.* Halford) sets her five maids and five serving men to work about the farm. They are interrupted by the appearance of Charles II, disguised as Master Rowley (Herr Deulin), and Sir Launcelot Lambkin, a cavalier (Mr. Henderson), escaping from the Roundheads.

CHARLES:

Oddsfish, Sir Lambkin, these are pleasant quarters.
Thanks to the sun that lit us to these daughters;
I will stop here, and in the farm-yard loiter.
Whilst you go round about and reconnoitre.

As Sir Launcelot goes off, Alice, Dame Durden's niece (Louise Blanche), comes out of the house, and Charles at once accosts her:

[5] Quoted from the long review in the *Theatrical Journal* for Dec. 29, 1852. Elsewhere I have also quoted from the excellent review in the London *Times* for Dec. 28, 1852. All quotations whose source is not indicated are from the dialogue or elaborate stage directions of the pantomime itself, which was published without date in London by T. H. Lacy.

CHARLES:

Turn, lovely fair! That form has something in it
Which made me love you from the first-last minute.

ALICE:

And pray, sir, who are you?

CHARLES:

Fair maid, you see
One who is—hem—who is, I may say—*me*.

Charles proceeds to make himself very pleasing to Alice, but Dame Durden reappears and indignantly interferes. Charles turns his charm upon the old woman and promptly pacifies her. She is about to give him refreshment when the sound of a trumpet announces the approach of the Roundheads.

All the characters leave the stage. Then Sir Hudibras (Tom Matthews) and his squire, Ralpho (Mr. Drainem), enter, seat themselves at a table downstage, draw bread and black pudding from their boots, and commence to eat. Their repast is interrupted by the appearance upstage of a bear-baiting procession, consisting of a fiddler, a bear led by a bearward, a tinker and his wife, a cobbler, a butcher, an ostler, and a crowd of peasantry. Shouting "To bait a bear is quite unbearable," Hudibras attacks the procession with his sword. In the fighting and "usual comic business" that follows, he is knocked down by the bear and belabored by Trulla, the tinker's wife, with the fiddler's wooden leg. The bear-baiters depart singing, leaving Hudibras and Ralpho locked in a pair of stocks from which they are released by Dame Durden, who makes a well-timed entry with her maids and serving men. Exclaiming "Thou art the widow whom I still adore," the grateful knight sends Ralpho for his soldiers and resumes courtship of Durden, to whom he is an old suitor. Ralpho soon returns with a troop of Roundheads, and the scene closes with a "comic Review" in which the soldiers, after bowing and exchanging cards, unfurl scrolls attached to their pikes and labelled: "This is a Civil War," "May I trouble you to move?" "Sorry to intrude," "Don't mention it, I beg," "Anxious to oblige."

The next scene is the Penderell Plantation at sunset, with the Haunted Oak. Charles rushes onstage as though in flight, carrying a carpet bag and large umbrella.



CHARLES:

All's safe as yet. This is the prudent way
To be prepared against a rainy day.
Oddsfish! a petticoat! There's no resistance
When pretty girls are looming in the distance.

Alice enters hastily, looking backward in alarm, and falls into the arms of Charles, who makes the most of his position. His love-making, however, is cut short by the sound of the Roundhead March. At Alice's suggestion, he climbs the haunted oak and is just concealing himself in the branches when Hudibras, Ralpho, and the troop of Roundheads re-enter. Impressed by Alice's beauty, Hudibras sends away his companions and again turns suitor. While he is kneeling before her under the oak and kissing her hand, Charles shakes acorns on his bald head and the jealous Durden appears and lays a cudgel across his fat shoulders, knocking him flat. Thereupon Charles slides down the tree and is led off by Alice to "a place of safety."

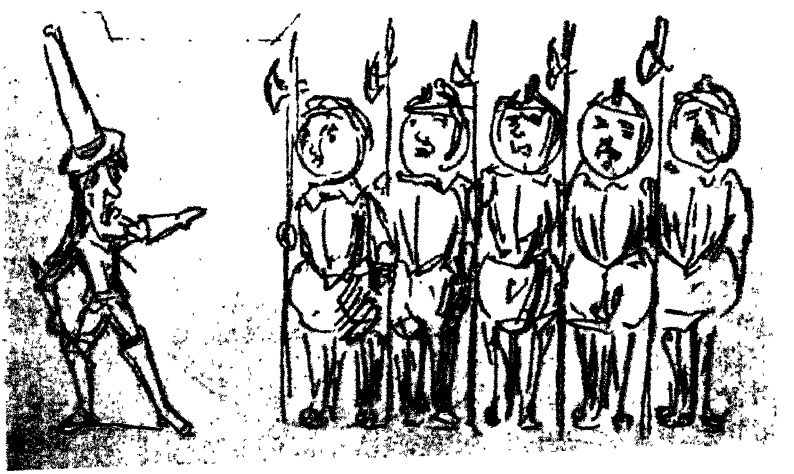
The scene shifts to the Great Kitchen in Boscobel Manor House, "a spacious Antique Apartment, with the broad beams and massive pillars . . . of the period; in centre, a gigantic Fireplace, with fire blazing, and a large joint (a sirloin of beef) roasting

before it." Cooking utensils of the usual pantomime size are scattered about the room, and downstage stands a table set for dinner. To the cook, scullery maid, and butler Alice introduces Charles as a friend who has come to help them. Charles makes up to the cook, and she sets him to basting the roast. As he eyes the sizzling meat he remarks:

> A dainty dish to set before a king;
> So fine a joint should knighthood honour bring;
> A happy thought! this joint of beef and bone,
> Be as Sir Loin to future ages known.

Charles draws his sword and knights the joint. The cook turns around suddenly and, mistaking his purpose, faints into the butler's arms. Charles grabs a pepper castor and holds it under her nose as smelling salts. With much sneezing, she comes to, and Charles explains his action. At this point Alice cries that the Roundheads are coming. "Charles becomes very uneasy, thinks he had better explain who he is, takes out a large cardcase, and afterwards a large card from it, inscribed 'King Charles the Second, No. 1. St. James's Palace.' " The cook is horrified at the indignity to which she has subjected him, and all take the oath of allegiance.

As Charles dons the cap and apron of an assistant cook, Hudibras enters with Ralpho and the soldiers, and demands dinner.



"They all show great unwillingness to prepare it, but at last consent, and in the course of laying the cloth and putting the huge joint upon the table, they contrive various annoyances for the Knight, such as spilling the hot gravy over him, giving him the wrong end of the carving knife." When Hudibras calls for wine, the butler fills his glass with vinegar. He takes a mouthful and throws the rest towards the door "where it is received in full by Dame Durden," who is entering at the moment with a basket of butter. Apologizing profusely, Hudibras wipes the vinegar from her face with the tablecloth and then proposes a cotillion. During the uproar that accompanies the dance, Charles knocks down Hudibras and again escapes; and the scene closes with Durden's rushing to assist the knight and slapping a large piece of sticking plaster on his bruised forehead.

Here the action jumps to the Abode of Sydrophel, the Astrologer, an old dilapidated house bearing a sign in one window: "Fortunes told and Carpets beat. Broken Fortunes repaired, and new ones made on the shortest notice and most reasonable terms." Hudibras comes to the astrologer's door, encounters him, and shows him a sign on which is written: "Shall I Marry the Widow?" Sydrophel first collects his fee and then induces Hudibras to enter the house while he remains outside to consult the heavens. As he is fussing with his telescope, Dame Durden appears and holds up a sign lettered: "Will Hudibras marry the Widow Durden?" Realizing who she is, the astrologer takes her money, gives her a card marked "Yes," and sends her away delighted. He then calls Hudibras from the house and hands him a similar card. As Hudibras leaves the stage, he meets Durden, who is returning, card in hand, to ask Sydrophel another question. Seeing that they have been tricked, "they turn their revenge on the Astrologer, the Dame tearing the hair off his head, whilst Hudibras beats him with his own telescope. The Astrologer and his Attendant run off, and the Dame and Hudibras go off together as if to be married." This entire scene is in pantomime, not a word being spoken.

The following scene is laid in Cheapside and the Conduit in the year 1660. Cloths of silver and gold swing from the houses, and the street is lined with excited people, among whom Hudibras, Alice, and Dame Durden, are prominent. As "the pageant of Charles the Second's Restoration" approaches, the crowd breaks into the song, "Hail to the Merry Monarch." Charles cracks an



old joke and, sighting Alice, tries to kiss her. Antiquity and the Genius of Improvement suddenly appear. Improvement waves her wand, and the scene vanishes. "The Conduit becomes a Fairy Temple, with the little Fairy, Progress, in the center, and all changing to correspond—wheel, pillars, and prismatic fountains all moving and forming The Palace of Progress in the Regions of Art." The characters speak:

IMPROVEMENT:

With Art and Science, long may Peace appear,
Whilst Progress brings Improvement every year.

ANTIQUITY:

And now for fun—the oldest here enjoys
A hearty laugh as much as little boys.

The Grand Transformation has arrived, the height of the evening's entertainment. Charles (Signor Verroni at this point) becomes Harlequin; Alice, Columbine; Dame Durden, Pantaloon; Hudibras, Clown; and Ralpho (here Signor Devani), a Contortionist Sprite. Thereupon, once more according to *The Times,* "the topics and follies of the day are passed in review, while Harlequin and Clown maltreat one another and everybody else, and Harlequin meets the doom of all harlequins that ever jumped by falling wildly in love with Columbine. The sale of sarsaparilla, teetotalism, . . . the wonderful feats of the hairdressers, the Derby Election, the 'Uncle Tom' mania, Chancery

reform, the Beerbottle question, and the Australian Goldfields, are all punned upon with varying success; and, to gratify all tastes, a squad of police is brought in and assaulted. . . . Harlequin knocks a policeman on the head; a fight ensues and leads to the general discomfiture of the 'Peelers,' and the frantic joy of the topmost tiers." The pantomime comes to an end with all of the participants singing:

> To each and all a fair Good Night
> And rosy dreams and slumbers light.

And the curtain falls between the bowing performers and the applauding audience.



HARLEQUIN

JUVIBRAS.

AND

OLD DAME DURDEN

OR THE

MERRY MONARCH.



Burlesque Characters by

"Pickwynken"



"As Rusty as an Old Tomahawk."
Harvey Custer throwing his troops as devouring the bulk of "another old Sioux"

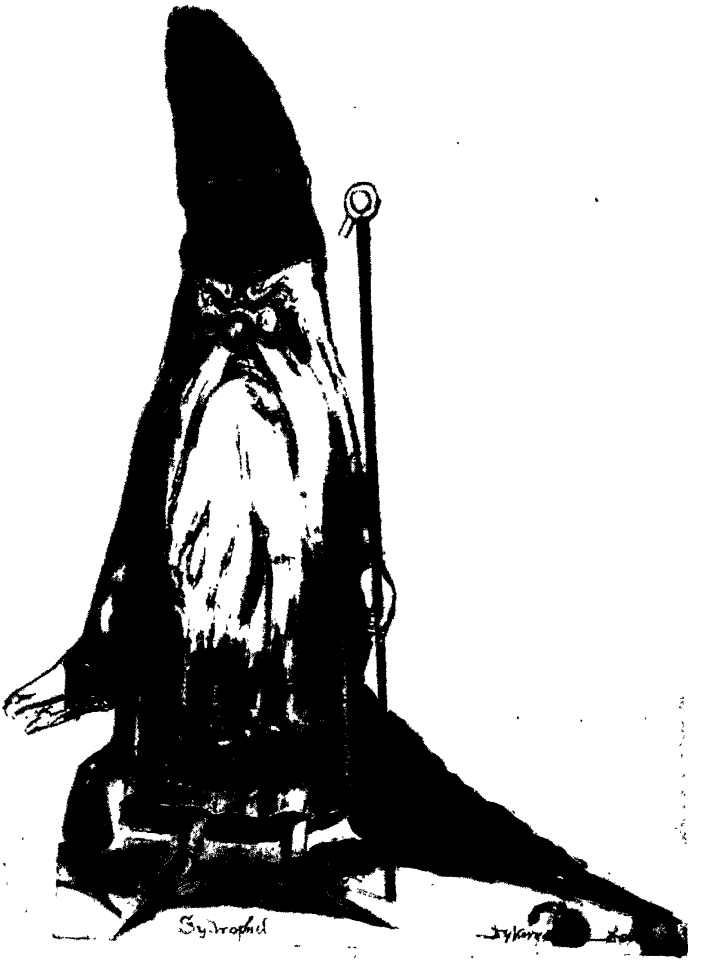
Rust

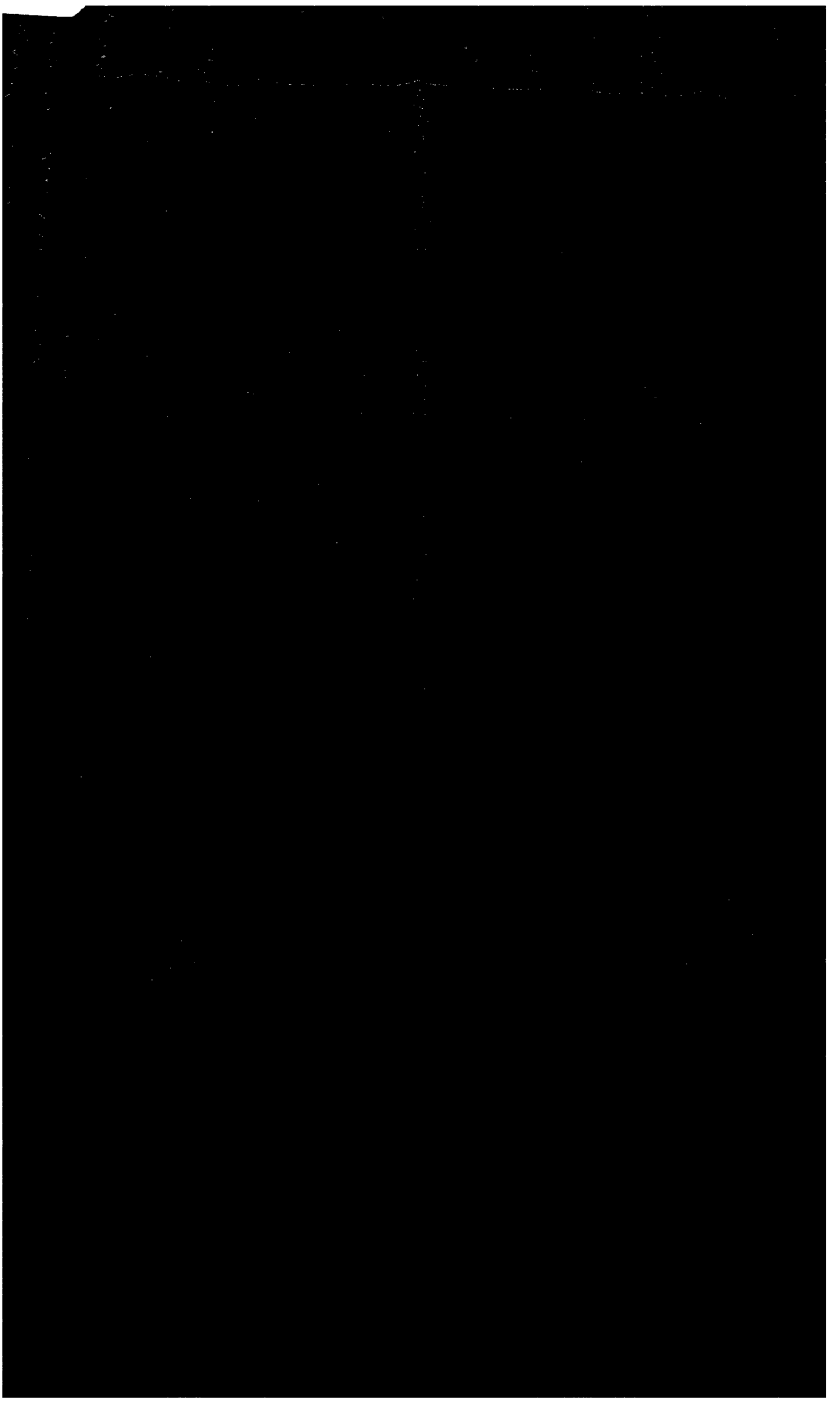

Sir Hugh. De Boras Kaiser


Ralpho his 'Squire






Sydrophel





"Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand."

Julius Caesar at the Winter Garden, New York, November 25, 1864, the only time that the three Booth brothers appeared together. Left to right: John Wilkes as Antony, Edwin as Brutus, Junius Brutus as Cassius.

—From a rare photograph in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

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EDWIN BOOTH'S IAGO: A STUDY OF A GREAT SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

by

ARTHUR COLBY SPRAGUE

"Well, old boy, we are at last in the great world, where I shall soon be known or lost in the fog." Booth is writing from a London hotel on August 25, 1880. Still in his forties and near the height of his powers as an artist, he might well have been more confident. Save to the few who still talked of Forrest, he was America's greatest actor. England, his father's country, was still to be won.

He was already a little tired. "I can't get up an ounce of steam, try as I will," his letter continues.[1] Tragic misfortunes, of which the death of his wife, his beloved Mary Devlin, and the mad crime of his brother, the assassin of Lincoln, were but the most terrible, had aged him; nor was their sum even now complete. A second wife, desperately ill—dying as it proved—and at times insane, had accompanied him to England.

With a hastily assembled English company, which left much to be desired, although among them was John Ryder, a stalwart of earlier days, Booth opened the new Princess's Theatre on November 6. As safest for his voice after a long rest, he chose *Hamlet*.[2] Years later, Booth admitted that he would have done better to open with *King Lear*.[3] Or there was *Richelieu*. He "could not act *Hamlet* the first night";[4] it was, he told his friend Winter, "the most inflexible performance that I ever gave."[5]

The critics showed little enthusiasm. Granting the actor intellect, they complained of his coldness and artificiality. His use of gesture was excessive.

> He was apt to spoil the fine effect of certain passages by his adherence to the old trick of "taking the stage" at the end of speeches which are finished off with what the old school of acting considered a point.[6]

[1] William Bispham, "Memories and Letters of Edwin Booth," *The Century Magazine*, November 1893. Booth had acted in London in 1861 without attracting much attention.
[2] Jefferson Winter. "As I Remember," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 30, 1920 (*cf.* William Winter, *Life and Art of Edwin Booth* [New York 1893], p. 107).
[3] Edwin Milton Royle, *Edwin Booth as I Knew Him* (New York 1933), p. 32.
[4] Edwina Booth Grossman *Edwin Booth* (New York 1894), p. 214.
[5] William Winter, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[6] *The Saturday Review*, November 13, 1880. Booth's fondness for "taking the stage" in *Hamlet* is noted by Professor Copeland, *Edwin Booth* (Boston 1901), p. 74.

The memory of Charles Mayne Young was invoked for purposes of a detailed comparison[7]—Young was a member of the Kemble school. The American was even likened to Charles Kean.[8] That his declamation was admirable was generally allowed, though exception was taken to his accent:

> The pronunciation of a word is one thing; the key in which it is spoken, another. The exquisite speech of English private life—there is never too much of that at the theatre. . . .[9]

As Booth turned to other parts, in the weeks following, to Richelieu and Iago, to Bertuccio, in *The Fool's Revenge,* and Lear, the tone of the critics changed. Sala in *The Illustrated London News* decided that this actor was "the finest Bertuccio and, next to Macready, the finest Lear and the finest Richelieu" he had seen. *The Athenaeum* declared that the later scenes of *King Lear* might "count among the most distinct triumphs of art the present generation has had the opportunity to contemplate. . . . No English-speaking actor since Macready has possessed a method so admirable as Mr. Booth." *Punch,* indeed, remained obdurate: "In manner, Mr. BOOTH frequently reminds us of Mr. PHELPS, only without the growl . . ." was not intended as a tribute; and when the news came that Irving had engaged the American to appear with him at the Lyceum:—"The prices are to be doubled: it strikes us they should be halved."[10]

Meanwhile, Booth himself had been making the best of what he admitted was a long "uphill drag." In part, he blames the "gush" of his own countrymen in London: "There's no restraining the eagle when he feels like screeching & he 'scroched' too much for me."[11] English actors were cordial. Old Ryder, who had played with Macready, came to him deeply moved after *Richelieu* to declare that he had upset his idol.[12] Then, early in the new year, Irving called, and Booth liked him—"a very pleasant fellow and kindly inclined."[13] Irving, he remembered, had once supported him at Manchester; and he had tried before

[7] *The Illustrated London News,* November 13, 1880.
[8] Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play* (London 1883), II, 274.
[9] Frederick Wedmore in *The Academy,* November 13, 1880.
[10] *The Illustrated London News,* May 7, 1881; *The Athenaeum,* February 19, 1881; *Punch,* December 4, 1880, and April 2, 1881. For praise of Booth's Lear, see also *The Saturday Review,* February 19, 1881. Even at the outset, E. Palgrave Simpson had come forward in *The Theatre* (December 1, 1880) to defend his art as "eminently natural."
[11] Letter to Lawrence Barrett, dated January 20, 1881, in Harvard Theatre Collection (*cf.* Otis Skinner, *The Last Tragedian* [New York 1939], p. 195).
[12] Copeland, *op. cit.,* p. 118; Skinner, *op. cit.,* p. 48. Yet there were intrigues at the Princess's—see E. H. House, "Edwin Booth in London," *The Century Magazine,* December 1897.
[13] Skinner, *op. cit.,* p. 194.

leaving America to reach some arrangement with him in connection with the present visit. Negotiations had broken down, however, and Booth had pretty well decided that the Englishman had "the big head."[14] Now they talked over plans, and Irving suggested that they should appear together in *Othello* at the Lyceum, alternating in the parts of Iago and the Moor.[15]

The advantage, as Booth saw it, was on his side, with Irving running all the risks. Irving would have the responsibility of producing the tragedy; he had not played Iago before; and he would have to continue to perform his part in Tennyson's *Cup* on the nights, three a week, when *Othello* was not to be given. "He has done a friendly thing," Booth writes, "and I hope he will reap a good reward for it, here and in America, if he should ever go there."[16]

At the earlier rehearsals Booth, quite characteristically, sent his dresser to represent him.[17] When he did go himself, Ellen Terry found him "very gentle and apathetic . . . I have never in any face, in any country, seen such wonderful eyes."[18]

The first performance, with Booth as Othello, Irving as Iago, was on Monday, May 2, 1881. Then, a week later, Irving was the Moor and Booth his ancient.[19] Ellen Terry played Desdemona; Terris, Cassio; and Pinero, Roderigo.

One reads of the "tumultuous applause" bestowed upon the performers by a great audience; of the many artists and authors who were present; of the "Boothites," "Irvingites," and "Terryites."[20] The popular parts of the theatre were "densely thronged." G. R. Foss, the actor, tells of being at the pit door from one o'clock in the afternoon (pit seats were to be had for two shillings). "There were no queues in those days; it was a football scrum, all hard shoving and the devil take the hindmost. But it was worth it."[21] Thinking over the play afterwards, the critic, Mowbray Morris, could take comfort in the thought

> that our much abused and derided theatre has really produced something to which, without vanity, we may point as a proof that this nine-

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[15] House, *op. cit.* *Venice Preserved* and *Julius Caesar* were also mentioned.
[16] Bispham, *op. cit.*
[17] Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (New York and London 1906), I, 2 (*cf.* I, 89).
[18] Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (London 1908), pp. 203, 204. For the rehearsals, see also Brander Matthews, *Principles of Playmaking* (New York 1919), p. 291.
[19] Special matinees were added later in the engagement, which closed on June 15.
[20] See, especially, *The Illustrated London News*, May 7, 1881.
[21] G. R. Foss, *What the Author Meant* (London 1932), p. 79. For the crowding "pittites," see also Sir John Martin-Harvey, *Autobiography* (London [1933]), p. 42.

teenth century of ours, despite the jibes of *Punch*, is not wholly unworthy to enjoy the heritage of Shakespeare;

and, albeit "with the utmost trepidation," he "would hazard the doubt whether, even in the happiest days of the poetic drama, . . . this noble play can ever have been *as a whole* much more satisfactorily presented."[22] It may be added that Irving's Iago—an unconventional characterization abounding in brilliant detail—was very generally preferred to Booth's Othello.

Public interest showed no sign of waning with the exchange of roles. Booth's Iago was warmly praised. *The Times* actually liked it better than Irving's—"less startling," indeed, "less spirited," but as a whole "more artistic."[23] Sir Theodore Martin finds this Venetian "much more likely than Mr. Irving's to impress those around him with the belief of his 'exceeding honesty.'" The evil in the character flashed out upon occasion "with tenfold force by contrast with the careless ease of his general bearing. Every word told without having undue stress laid upon it." The "soliloquies were those of a man really thinking aloud."[24]

That there was development in Booth's conception of the role is asserted by a writer in whom I have great confidence, Henry Austin Clapp. According to Clapp, Booth at first had fitted his performance "to his physical limitations," making Iago "a light, comfortable villain" and bringing out his human qualities. "Later he darkened the hues of his conception, and steadily increased its force . . . and profundity." Malice gave place to a satanic malevolence. There was now an "absolute self-consistency," and "unfailing relation of every point and particular . . . to the total scheme."[25]

Yet many of the distinguishing traits of Booth's earlier Iago, as we know them from the detailed description by Lucia Calhoun in the 'sixties, lasted on unchanged. There was plausibility. This villain indulged in

no stage winks and grimaces. Save in his soliloquies he makes no confessions to himself. If Othello had suddenly turned upon him, at any

[22] Mowbray Morris, *Essays in Theatrical Criticism* (London 1882), pp. 94, 95.

[23] *The Times*, May 11, 1881 (*cf.* Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 98). Many writers, of course, gave the advantage to Irving.

[24] Sir Theodore Martin, "The Meiningen Company and the London Stage," *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1881.

[25] "Edwin Booth," in F. E. McKay and C. E. L. Wingate, *Famous Actors of Today* (New York and Boston [1896]), pp. 36, 37 (*cf.* Clapp's *Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic* [Boston and New York 1902], pp. 135, 136).

moment in their interview, he would have seen only the grave, sympathetic, respectful, troubled face that was composed for him to see.[26]

So Dutton Cook, writing of Booth at the Princess's, could "remember no *Iago* at once so natural and plausible, so intellectual and so terrible";[27] and John Ranken Towse agrees that he was "entirely plausible. . . . His most pernicious lies to Othello —concerning Cassio's dream and the handkerchief, for instance, —he administered in the most deceptive form, that of an involuntary confidence."[28]

Booth himself is quotable on this same matter of plausibility. In one of the memorable notes which he contributed to the Furness Variorum *Othello* in 1885, Iago is advised:

> Do not smile, or sneer, or glower,—try to impress even *the audience* with your sincerity. 'Tis better, however, always to ignore the audience; if you can forget that you are a "shew" you will be natural. The more sincere your manner, the more devilish your deceit. I think the "light comedian" should play the villain's part, not the "heavy man;" I mean the Shakespearian villains. Iago should appear to be what all but the audience believe he is. Even when alone, there is little need to remove the mask entirely. Shakespeare spares you that trouble.[29]

Unpretentious as the words are, they are yet full of meaning. In another note, returning to the idea of Iago's seeming sincerity, he warns:

> Don't *act* the villain; don't *look* it or *speak* it (by scowling and growling, I mean), but *think* it all the time. Be genial, sometimes jovial, always gentlemanly. Quick in motion as in thought; lithe and sinuous as a snake. A certain bluffness (which my temperament does not afford) should be added to preserve the military flavour of the character; in this particular I fail utterly; my Iago lacks the soldierly quality.[30]

"Versatility" was another characteristic of Booth's performance in the 'sixties. His Iago was an accomplished actor. To Othello, "the truthful, respectful adherent and friend"; to Desdemona, "the courteous servant"; to Cassio, "the open and generous fellow-soldier"; to Roderigo, "a dashing buck." To Emilia alone he remained the "inscrutable, black-browed schemer,

[26] Lucia Calhoun, "Edwin Booth," *The Galaxy*, VII (1869), p. 83. William Winter speaks approvingly, however, of "the subtle use of gesture and facial play" by means of which Booth made Iago's duplicity evident to the spectators (*Shakespeare on the Stage*, First Series [New York 1911], p. 271); and *The Athenaeum*, January 22, 1881, says that there were suggestions of the villain in his dress.

[27] Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 303.

[28] J. R. Towse, *Sixty Years of the Theater* (New York and London 1916), p. 190.

[29] Variorum *Othello*, p. 146. Mr. Richard Lockridge has made good use of these notes in his *Darling of Misfortune* (New York and London [1932]), pp. 341 ff.

[30] Variorum *Othello*, p. 214. "Lithe" is a term frequently applied to Booth's Iago, and for "sinuosity" *cf.* R. G. White, *Studies in Shakespeare* (Boston and New York 1885), p. 265.

whom she distrusts, but does not understand."[31] This swiftness of adaptation, this power of moulding himself to what others suppose him to be, distinguished the characterization at all times. The possibility that, except of course in the soliloquies, the part might be done throughout in a "bluff, vigorous, and off-hand manner" did, indeed, occur to one English critic. But to have played it so would have been to miss "the constantly-changing interest, grace and vivacity of Mr. Booth's performance."[32] It was exactly in bluffness, moreover, that Booth (as we saw) found himself wanting.

When Iago dropped his mask there were "grave and even terrible moments."[33] Lucia Calhoun tells of one such, near the close of the tragedy, "I bleed, sir, but-not-killed" became as Booth spoke it "the mocking defiance of a devil, indeed." In later years, the baleful and the fiendish in the character were brought out increasingly. It "seemed to be enveloped in an aura of evil";[34] to pervade the tragedy "like an Evil Principle."[35] Otis Skinner remembered it as "radiant with devilish beauty";[36] White, the Shakespearean commentator, spoke of the hate burning in the eyes—the face at times looked "snake-like."[37]

At two moments, above all, the diabolical was manifest. Near the close of the tragedy, when Othello would know why "that demi-devil" had ensnared him, the Venetian only says:

> Demand me nothing. What you know, you know.
> From this time forth, I never will speak word;

and Booth's utterance of these words was accompanied by a hideous grinding of his teeth, as if, indeed, torments could never make him speak.[38] Earlier in the same act, Cassio and Roderigo lie wounded; Iago stands over them. It is night and the street is deserted. Suddenly, the villain stabs his miserable dupe:

> *Roderigo*: O damn'd Iago! O inhuman dog!
> *Iago*: Kill men i' th' dark? Where be these bloody knaves?
> How silent is this town.

Here, according to Booth's invention, Iago would have killed

[31] Calhoun, *loc. cit.*
[32] *The Saturday Review*, January 29, 1881.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Towse, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
[35] Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 303.
[36] Otis Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights* (New York 1924), p. 93.
[37] White, *op. cit.*, p. 265.
[38] See, especially, Katherine Goodale, *Behind the Scenes with Edwin Booth* (Boston and New York 1931), p. 110; Variorum *Othello*, p. 324; Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights*, p. 94.

Cassio as well, and actually raised his hand to do so, only to be stopped by the sight of Lodovico and Gratiano approaching. "Ho! murder, murder!" he cries instantly; but the deed remains uncompleted.[39]

Passages of quiet intensity, where Iago actually does or says little, Booth could also make memorable. Irving was endlessly praised for the realistic byplay he introduced in the scene where Iago, watching the innocent familiarities of Cassio and Desdemona, comments viciously upon them. Irving ate grapes and spat out the seeds. "The action is easy and natural enough," Mowbray Morris writes,

> yet how much less really natural to the character than Mr. Booth's still, respectful attitude, leaning against the sun-dial, alert to execute any command, seeming careless what goes on so long as he is ready when wanted, yet ever watching his prey with sly, sleepless vigilance.[40]

Nor did his "silent hatred" of Emilia in Act IV, sc. ii, escape notice.[41] Here the "half-menacing" words he addresses to her were spoken "almost as an aside."[42]

In the notes, already referred to, which Booth sent to Furness for the Variorum *Othello,* he repeatedly warns the performers against theatricality. "O, you are well tun'd now," says Iago, when the lovers are happy in being reunited,

> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music.

And the words "should be spoken with calm assurance; not too pointedly. He knows he will make the discord,—so does the audience."[43] Just before the Temptation Scene in the third act, Iago's "I like not that" is annotated: "Don't growl this,—let it barely be heard by the audience." A little later, the villain begins:

> Good name in man and woman, good my lord.
> Is the immediate jewel of their souls . . .

and Booth writes: "Don't fire this directly at Othello, but trust to the 'whiff and wind' of it, for your effect on him, and on the audience too, although it may not gain applause from them as do the scowls and growls of the stage-villain." Still another caveat against over-playing appears in the note on Cassio's speech about

[39] See, especially, William Winter, *Life and Art of Edwin Booth,* pp. 113, 247.
[40] Morris, *op. cit.,* p. 102.
[41] *The Saturday Review,* January 29, 1881.
[42] *The Athenaeum,* January 22, 1881 (*cf.* Variorum *Othello,* pp. 267, 268).
[43] Variorum *Othello,* p. 114. I have known Iago to get a laugh here—to the actor's shame.

his lost reputation: "In Cassio's speech . . . don't preach; be not violent; avoid rant; yet be impassioned.—feel thoroughly disgusted with yourself, and you'll be natural. Walk about, but don't stamp or 'saw the air.'"

The idea that an actor should feel the emotions he is expressing reappears in what is perhaps the finest, certainly the most idealistic, of all the notes. The Duke has attempted in vain to console Brabantio. Then they turn to state affairs.

> Othello leaves Desdemona with Cassio, who regards her with tender, yet respectful admiration. Iago, at back, watches them curiously, but let him not be obtrusive; he must keep in the background and assume this expression, and feel the curiousness, even if only one person in the audience sees or understands it; the "censure," as Hamlet calls it, of that one is worth all the rest.

But did Booth himself "feel the curiousness"? Was he like Macready in experiencing the emotions of his characters? It is impossible to be sure. We hear of how greatly his performances varied. At times, we are told by one who observed him closely, "he was somewhere else, and his art moved as in a mist."[44] Was it that at just such times emotion had completely failed him?

Finally, the sensitiveness of Booth's feeling for the play is repeatedly suggested by his annotations. Cassio greets Desdemona in courtly terms upon her safe arrival in Cyprus. Then he turns to Emilia:

> Welcome mistress.
> Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
> That I extend my manners. 'Tis my breeding
> That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

So saying, he kisses her—kisses her face, as Booth points out, "not, as is frequently done, her hand"—and "Iago winces slightly, for he 'suspects Cassio with his nightcap.'" When, again, they are talking of Desdemona just before the Drinking Scene—"What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to provocation"—"Iago watches Cassio intently." In each instance, the rightness of the action called for is obvious. Such notes as these have almost the value of original stage directions.

It was the soundness of the actor's conceptions, rather than their originality, which won praise. As Hamlet, he made clear where the Prince was merely feigning madness, where he was in

[44] Royle, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Winter and Copeland agree on the extreme inequality of Booth's acting.

reality perilously near to being deranged.[45] In Richard III, as in Iago, he restricted his confidences in the audience to the soliloquies and asides.[46] Reading of Booth, one is sometimes reminded of Phelps—though Booth himself did not like the comparison[47]—but more often of Betterton.

In range, to be sure, he was inferior to either. Though he liked to play Benedick, and especially Petruchio, he was not at his best in comedy. The humor which shines through his letters seems to have deserted him on the stage. Winter, thinking no doubt of his Hamlet, calls Booth a specialist "in passionate melancholy and poetical delirium."[48] Skinner finds it strange that "with such gentleness as his" he yet achieved his "greatest effects . . . in parts of a sinister and diabolical character."[49] In England, nevertheless, he added to his reputation when he passed from the role of Iago to that of King Lear. And Lear, like Othello, lay a little beyond him physically—or so it was thought.

Of middle height, no more, he was slenderly built, free and graceful in movement. His face with its sculpturesque features and dark, flashing eyes, was, like his body, perfectly under control. So extraordinary were his eyes that children sometimes "kept the look of them as almost the sole recollection of plays in which they had seen him." Booth's Shylock had once been to Professor Copeland "nothing but a pair of eyes, large, dark, awful, and bright—above all, bright, and seeming to give out light."[50] So, it will be recalled, Kean's eyes had haunted those who saw them.

In England, Booth's art was considered old-fashioned, and there is no questioning his conservatism. Out of weariness and discouragement, he came to tolerate in his own productions such characteristic evils of the American starring system as carelessness in rehearsing and palpable inadequacy in the players who supported him. His Shakespearean texts were, it is true, freshly edited, but they were still cut and dismembered (in Booth's *Richard II* the waits between acts amounted to a full third of the evening),[51] and their prudishness was ridiculous. *The Athenaeum,* after admitting that "we have ourselves gone pretty

[45] W. T. Arnold, *The Manchester Guardian,* November 22, 1882, quoted in *The Manchester Stage* (Westminster [1900]), pp. 38, 39.
[46] Copeland, *op. cit.,* p. 30.
[47] Skinner, *The Last Tragedian,* p. 195.
[48] William Winter, *Life and Art of Edwin Booth,* p. 260.
[49] Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights,* p. 172 (*cf.* Towse, *op. cit.,* p. 190).
[50] Copeland, *op. cit.,* p 13.
[51] Typewritten promptbook at The Players, New York City (fifty-eight minutes out of a total of two hours and fifty-seven minutes).

far in Bowdlerizing our acted drama," finds that the Americans are

> leagues ahead of us. . . . If such a word as "lechery" may not even be mentioned, if a phrase like "A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his bones!" is too "shocking," and if "She repeals him for her body's lust" needs to be expressed by a euphemism, we care not how soon the attempt to play Shakespeare is abandoned.[52]

In a brief but memorable essay on Edmund Kean, Booth defends imitation. Why, he asks, is the word used "as a slur upon the actor alone?" He too, having his old masters, will show wisdom in being guided by them. "Tradition, if it be traced through pure channels, and to the fountain head, leads one as near to Nature as can be followed by her servant, Art."[53] And it was said of Booth, with not too much exaggeration, that "the tradition of his father and of Edmund Kean was his law."[54]

He was, of course, no mere copier of others. A letter of his to a subordinate actor, dated August 9, 1866, is interesting in this connection. Booth is explaining why he has made no effort to have the younger man retained at the Winter Garden:

> I may as well be frank with you and state that my principle [*sic*] reason for remaining "neutral" was owing to a fatal habit which I saw growing upon you . . . an unfortunate custom (to which all young actors are prone) of imitation. It took me several years to rid myself of the fault; all my Father's mannerisms and imperfections I acquired by being so constantly with him—when they were pointed out to me I watched myself closely and rooted them out.[55]

When, years later, he was asked how his father's acting compared with his own, "he hesitated and then said: 'I think I must be somewhat quieter.' "[56]

Increasingly he sought to avoid extravagance, fustian, theatricality, and it was exactly as he succeeded in avoiding them that his acting became natural. As Hamlet, in the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern after the Mousetrap, he had once flung the recorder into the flies—"though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me." [57] Even at the Princess's in 1880, he had unwarrantably delayed Hamlet's first entrance so as to

[52] *The Athenæum*, January 22, 1881. William Winter was Booth's editor.
[53] Brander Matthews and Laurence Hutton, *Actors and Actresses* (New York n. d.), III, 10, 11.
[54] William Winter, *Life and Art of Edwin Booth*, p. 96.
[55] Manuscript letter in the Harvard Theatre Collection. In another hand, the actor addressed is identified as Charles Barron.
[56] Skinner, *Footlights and Spotlights*, p. 93.
[57] William Winter, *Shadows of the Stage*, First Series (New York 1892), p. 77. For Booth's approaches toward naturalism, see, especially, Lockridge, *op. cit.*, pp. 336 ff.

appear more conspicuously, and be applauded, only just before he is addressed.[58] Such claptrap devices he gave up one by one, achieving a style more truly dignified, and in a sense classical, as his art matured. A purer taste was finding expression within the tradition, founded by Kean, of dazzling brilliance and passionate intensity. Still another English reviewer came nearer, I believe, than the rest to accuracy of appreciation. In *Dramatic Notes* for 1880-1881, Booth's acting is distinguished from that of "the robust school represented in the past by Edwin Forrest, and at present by Mr. John McCullough."

> His method, on the contrary, is almost coldly intellectual, and yet ornate and polished to an extreme degree. His elocution is impressive, and many words fall from his lips with an hitherto undiscovered beauty. But the scholarly studiousness which may be observed in his acting is not the limit of his resources, nor are the natural advantages of a handsome face, a sonorous voice, and a graceful form. Mr. Booth is an emotional and inspirational actor, and the very delicacy of his art leads him to curb and refine the expression of qualities, which are often simulated by mere boisterousness.

At one point, Booth clearly excelled his contemporaries. In England the speaking of verse had come to be regarded as a lost art. There was Ryder, to be sure, though Ryder was not among the great; there had been Phelps; but the unique beauty and expressiveness of Booth's reading were immediately recognized.[59] Nor was his "elocution" forced or mechanical. Rather, it sprang from a perception that in Shakespeare's verse sound and sense, the movement of the lines and their meaning, were inseparably related. To the service of the poet, he brought a fine intelligence and an ear attuned to the music of words. His enunciation was beautifully distinct. He used a "wise economy of emphasis."[60] "He says he has no ear for music," wrote Madame Modjeska, "but any mistake in blank verse jars upon him like a false note."[61] It was a fastidiousness becoming to one who took pride in preserving what was best in a splendid heritage.

[58] Concerning this belated entrance, see my *Shakespeare and the Actors*, pp. 133, 134.

[59] See, for example, *The Times*, *The Illustrated London News*, and *The Athenaeum* on his Hamlet.

[60] Copeland, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 70. See also Clapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 31; Royle, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Sadly worn as they are, the two gramophone recordings made by Booth near the close of his life are still impressive.

[61] Helena Modjeska, *Memories and Impressions* (New York 1910), p. 500.

FILIPINO DRAMA OF THE PAST AND PRESENT

by

JEAN EDADES

This article was begun in 1940 from data gathered over several years of a busy life of teaching and directing plays at the University of the Philippines. When Baguio and Tarlac were bombed a few hours after Pearl Harbor, classes were immediately discontinued. There followed weeks of uncertainty and grave anxiety, weeks in which no writing was possible. With the Japanese occupation of the Islands, my worst fears were quieted, and I was able to complete the article or, rather, a rough draft of it.

Some of my sources are no longer extant, having perished in the destruction of Manila. I had the good fortune to learn at first hand the essential spirit of the *moro-moro* from Ilocano *comedia* veterans, who guided my every step in the revival of one of their plays.

These grim days from Bataan and Corregidor to the liberation of Manila have aroused in us a great respect for our indomitable allies and a new interest in their arts and customs. None of these has more to offer than their theatre. Until American movies weaned them away from it, the theatre was the chief inspiration and delight of almost all Filipinos. The magic of each performance was relived by families gathered in the evening quiet. They recalled how appealingly one actor recited a certain flowery passage, how skillfully another danced. The Filipino's humble life was deepened and enriched by the variety and color of his theatre.

Tremendously important in the development of his love for the drama was the Roman Catholic Church. After Magellan's discovery of the Islands in 1521, the friars, who came on every Spanish ship, lost no time in making converts; and the better to reach the hearts of their flock, they gave religious plays, with natives taking the minor parts. The first of these to be recorded is dated 1529. A play about Santa Barbara, performed in Bohol in 1609, convinced the spectators that sinners will endure the fire of hell. Other early miracle plays were *The Wise Virgins*

and the Foolish Virgins (*Las Vírgenes Prudentes y las Vírgenes Locas*) and the *Tragedy of Saint Inez* (*Tragedia de la Santa Inez*).

In the provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, and Cavite the only part of the Holy Story acted out was the search of Mary and Joseph for a night's lodging, followed by the conventional tableau beside the Manger. But in the Visayan Islands, particularly in the Aklan region of Cápiz, the *daigon* or Nativity Play (given right up to the outbreak of the War) takes months of careful preparation. The curate usually sponsors the performance. Two months before Christmas the final arrangements are made and the characters selected. Mary is chosen not only for her beauty but for her character as well. The other actors, too, must deserve the honor of participating. Rehearsals are carried on in the convent next the church before chaperons and a few privileged persons.

The *daigon* is presented during the nine days before Christmas and a few days thereafter. Instead of acting on a permanent stage, the troupe goes from house to house, receiving gifts at each and being feasted at the homes of the rich. The action is divided into four parts:

> [First] the appearance of the Angel Gabriel before the praying Virgin to herald the coming of her child. In the same scene appears the personification of Satan tempting her, but he is driven away by the angel. Second, Mary and Joseph going from house to house, asking for a night's lodging. Third, the shepherds and their flock, and the appearance of the herald angel in their midst to announce the birth of their King. The final scene deals with the Nativity itself, when pauper and prince come to lay their gifts at the feet of the Newborn Babe.[1]

Music accompanies the performance, the words being chanted.

But most loved of all was the Passion Play. Now beginning to lose its popularity, this play was for centuries an event of the greatest importance. When facilities for its staging were unobtainable, a religious reading was offered as a substitute.

Rarely given today, this reading is the recitation in Lent of a vernacular version of the Bible, the words being chanted to an old religious tune. The chanters, who must remain for long hours on their knees, are usually illiterates who have memorized the entire stories of the temptation of Adam and Eve and of the birth, sufferings, and death of Christ. The reading takes from Palm

[1] D. L. Francisco, "Local Dramas of the Nativity." *Philippines Free Press*, December 10, 1932.

Sunday to midnight of Good Friday, and since it is a religious duty never to interrupt the recitation, stand-ins are ready to relieve readers who need food or sleep.

A more dramatic rendering of the Passion was the debate concerning the life of Christ, held, not in front of the altar, but in the house itself as a social function.

> Visitors from distant places would be asked to participate against the local boys and girls. Either party might begin by propounding a riddle in song. The opposite party would answer the question by chanting and acting out passages from the *Pasión*. This recitation and this stylized dancing were completely done from memory. There was neither book nor prompter. And what is more important, a great many of the expert readers and actors of the *Pasión* were illiterate yet well-versed in the . . . various passages of the *Pasión* and were always ready to please the audience with their singing and dancing ability and with the exactness of their verse-recitations.
>
> An example might be interesting. A man from a distant town places on the table twelve pins, match sticks, or cigarettes. While doing so he gives the riddle in verse. He wants to know what the placing of the twelve pins or match sticks on the table means. Immediately, the local boy or girl answers by chanting passages from the *Pasión* showing the story of the Last Supper, the treachery of Judas, and St. John's attitude. He not only sings, he acts and dances to make the meaning of the passages more graphic. After this is done and the audience approves of the answer, the local boy gives his riddle also in verse and the visitor answers, again from the *Pasión*. Should either host or visitor fail to answer correctly, then he would be punished by the judges of the performance—the spectators. Usually the oldest among them would give the punishment and the others would nod in assent. The punishment was usually the wearing of a crown of thorns or the carrying of a wooden cross.[2]

Often, as the chanting of the Passion goes on, the episodes mentioned are pantomimed. The impersonator of Jesus, for instance, carries a cross around the playing space to denote the journey to Calvary, and falls under his burden according to Scripture. In Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, and in Pangasinan this playing space is circular, fenced off by a bamboo barrier or a rope. The spectators stand or furnish their own chairs, being divided by a single aisle which serves also as the actors' passage to and from the stage. Thus the ancient Greek arena-stage is used today in tropical Luzon.

Following the custom in Chinese villages, well-to-do citizens of Philippine towns used to finance the performance of the Pas-

[2] José M. Hernández, "The Story of Oriental Drama"; unpublished manuscript, formerly in the University of Santo Tomás, Manila.

sion Play, called *cenaculo*. The actors, of course, were amateurs, and no great demands were made upon them, a prompter sometimes dictating almost every line. These plays were given as far back as the eighteenth century and survive at present in out-of-the-way places. They are presented in the same naïve way as the European mystery plays of the Middle Ages.

It may be that a person who has in his home several images of saints wishes, at Holy Week, to prove his devotion. He displays the saints in a simple, bamboo shrine, representing the Sepulchre. He then sends word to the neighbor best versed in the Passion that he wants to have the play enacted on Holy Thursday or Friday. The neighbor then gathers together others in the community who know the story well, assigns parts, and briefly reviews the plot for them. With no other preparation, they go to the shrine and begin the performance. By now, a large crowd has collected, standing patiently in the dust and heat, the older folk finding comfort in steady chews of the slightly narcotic betel nut.

The leader of the performers plays the Christ, for being seldom on the stage, he can prompt those who have forgotten. Every word in the narrative is repeated, not only speeches but all descriptive matter. Whenever possible, miracles are presented. Professional companies pride themselves on their convincing reproduction of even the most difficult miracles. As in the reading of the Passion, a certain melody is used throughout, to which all speeches are intoned.

Under normal conditions, in Manila and in near-by towns professional troupes do good business in Lent. Often they enact the entire story from the Creation to the Ascension, requiring about nine nights for its completion. Almost every night of Lent a *cenaculo* is given by amateurs somewhere in Manila—usually in the slums where tastes have not outgrown the crude spectacle. A stage, with a curtain at the back, is set up on any vacant lot. The actors try to dress like Biblical characters, the men draping their faces with property beards. Nonessentials are simply ignored: on one occasion Mary wore modern, high-heeled shoes. Christ always wears a halo, and the Virgin looks mournful from beginning to end. Jewish and Roman soldiers are played as fierce, boastful, goose-stepping warriors and furnish a welcome contrast to the sometimes monotonous meekness of the other characters.

In these presentations a chorus is present on the stage to sing the descriptive passages. The director himself stays with them. Besides singing, he keeps a close eye on his actors, and if anyone appears uncertain, he makes no bones about calling to him and telling him just where to go and what to do. Indeed, he often loses his temper and adds considerable fireworks to the play. The public condones all, feeling that this is no ordinary entertainment but a sort of religious duty. Each main character has his own leitmotif—soft, sweet strains for Jesus and His disciples and martial, clanging marches for the Romans. The orchestra, however, is silent when a character is chanting his lines.

In 1937 I saw a *cenaculo* by the river of San Juan at the border of Manila. A huge crowd milled about. Those who had brought benches sat on them if near the front, or stood on them if near the back. Since the audience could hear but little, it made no pretense of listening but enjoyed the opportunity for sociability. Sellers of hot, pungent-smelling, roast chestnuts, of chewing gum, of Tagalog magazines, and of trinkets circulated, crying their wares in no uncertain tones.

On the stage the Last Supper was in progress. Judas was played by an irrepressible show-off, whose antics gave an entirely new slant to the orthodox conception of the character. He hogged the stage by jumping up from his seat, skipping about, and picking up nuts from the tablecloth over the shoulders of the other disciples. The audience did not seem to be particularly reverent, perhaps a sign of the times. The pleasant informality, the eating and conversing, the taking of the play for granted—a play which is, after all, familiar to the audience—reminded me of Chinese theatregoers and made me wonder if this was not the best way to enjoy a play. In the provinces, the audience is apt to be less blasé and the whole atmosphere more reverent, for the performance is more closely linked with the church ritual.

Unique among Holy Week observances is the meticulous re-enactment of the Passion by the Colorums,[3] a Christian cult founded during the Spanish regime, who believe that the Lord transferred the Holy Land to the edge of Laguna province in Luzon. There on Mt. Banahaw, in places thought to be the actual scene of the Crucifixion, these long-bearded, long-haired mountaineers stage the last few hours in Calvary in the presence of

[3] So called because one of their sects makes frequent use of the ending to many of their Latin prayers, "*saecula saeculorum.*"

thousands of members from the lowlands and curious non-members, who trek eight kilometers of mountain trail from the nearest civilized outpost to see the realistic open-air performances.

By order of the Maestro his right-hand man, Bayani [patriot], is tied to the lashing pillar, as was the Lord on the night of His capture. He bears the cross, falls with it on the "exact" spot where Christ fell with its weight, is crucified. The Maestro was, by his admission, born in Nazareth, died on the Cross, became José Rizal, died again at Bagumbayan, and now his name is Agapito Ilustre.

In a red, white and blue costume, white triangle of Philippine flag as head-wear, 19 girls varying in age from 10 to 26 serve the Maestro in ceremonies and in his "court." Essential part of the Maestro's cult is singing Tagalog songs honoring God, Rizal, and the other heroes. . . . As in *moro-moro* performances, the ceremonial virgin, in singing, brandishes a wooden dagger and sword, moves about the Maestro with graceful dance steps. The Maestro is always attended by these girls. . . . Even in his sleep they sing around his bed.[4]

Another type of drama, full of bombast, blood, and thunder, is the *moro-moro* or *comedia*. Widely differing in treatment, in embellishments, and in interpretation among different provinces, the *moro-moro* always has for its climax a combat between doughty Mohammedan warriors and still doughtier Christians.

In the province of Pampanga the story is rather simple. Twelve men in red uniforms, representing Moros,[5] are the retainers of a princess whose beauty and wit have won the heart of a Christian chief. He is similarly attended by twelve fighting men, dressed in blue. The Moro princess soon returns the Christian's love and proposes an elopement. A spy reveals the plan to her retainers, and a terrible war ensues, accompanied by music and much slashing about with scimitar and sword. The Moros are vanquished, and those who have not fallen in battle accept Christianity. Often the play ended thus:

When the stage was strewn with the dead and the Christian prince had made his parting speech in a triumphant but not vainglorious tone, from the painted tree at the back there came a rush of sound. Then it opened up and amidst a great effulgence of light a woman or an angel dressed in flowing robes of immaculate whiteness would descend and take the hero by the hand. They would walk hand in hand while the band played the national anthem and the other characters looked on in undisguised admiration.[6]

[4] "Colorums Believe Holy Land has been Moved to Banahaw"; anonymous article in the Manila *Sunday Tribune* for April 6, 1941.

[5] Moros are Mohammedan Filipinos occupying most of Mindanao and all of Sulu; but often the name is used, as it is here, for Mohammedans in general.

[6] Hernández, *op. cit.*

In the Visayan Islands the plot is more elaborate. Perhaps a Christian princess is held captive by the infidels. Her warriors pursue the enemy. They fight in forest and on plain, are attacked by lions, tigers, giants, and other monsters, and are bewitched by fairies and ogres.

The play is crammed with all the excitement and variety which can occur to a poet of fertile imagination. The scene shifts constantly—from cavern to palace or from Spanish seacoast to Bohemian mountain top—and is depicted by painted backdrops or suggested by a property or two, the stage itself being a curtained bamboo structure lighted by a row of kerosene lamps—little more than the stage for the Passion Play. Greater emphasis is put upon the costumes. They are usually of vivid hues and liberally embellished with tinsel, gold braid, or flashing sequins. Often a well-to-do family is asked to provide the costume for one of the actors. The result is sure to be something gorgeous, in keeping with the donors' social prestige. Weapons are of wood or tin, painted silver.

In the Iloko provinces of the North the *moro-moro* stage has three doors, each representing a separate, rival kingdom whose name is printed thereon in big letters. For example, the signs may read "Emperio de Turkia," "Emperio de Albania," and "Emperio de Constantinople." At the end, when the Moros find that the Christians are such superior fighters, they gladly accept the new faith and are baptized by a little human angel who descends from Heaven via windlass and rope. So delighted are the Ilokanos with their play that after all is finished, they demand a repetition of favorite scenes, such as an embassy from one king to another, the assembling of the army in all its array, the fight with lions, and the scene in which the hero, upon the intervention of the heroine, escapes with his head.

A clown, like the Medieval Vice, is almost sure to be found in the *comedia*. Dressed in bright patches, his face painted fantastically, and carrying an absurd little sword, he follows his Christian or Mohammedan master at a distance, burlesquing his master's attitudes and *ad libbing* in the language of the street whenever the comic spirit moves him. One or two clowns raise a laugh in intermissions or at the end, often going as far as they dare in criticizing village officials and making satirical comments on the play.

The speeches are usually in grandiloquent verse and are declaimed with a monotonous, sing-song rhythm in a peculiar high voice—not the falsetto of the Chinese music-drama. Sometimes, as in any eighteenth-century melodrama, an actor breaks into song accompanied by the orchestra. Actors rarely have their parts entirely memorized. A skilled reader, standing behind the scenes, dictates the play bit by bit. The actor repeats his lines with actions, and while the audience do not hear the dictation, they know it is going on.

Moro-moros are most often seen in April and May, for these are the usual months of the town fiestas, and the *moro-moro* is—or was until recently—an indispensable part of those festivities. The long, rambling performance takes three days or more, the audience watching appreciatively till late each evening under the open sky. Since the actors are engaged by the town government or a religious order, admission is free.

It is not hard to persuade the men to take parts, but the girls expect to be coaxed by town officials and even by the *presidente*. Rehearsals are held in the plaza at night; so the whole town becomes familiar with the play ahead of time. The actors do not act in the Western sense. Nobody expects any histrionics. Facial expression counts for nothing. All that is needed is a good strong voice, ability to follow the beat of the music, and grace in the sword and spear fights.

The players open the show by marching around the stage, weaving their swords through the air in a sort of upward thrust and parry, requiring the supplest of wrists, or else manipulating them somewhat like a drum major. Students of Javanese drama will be interested to know that in the Visayan Islands the conventional fighting has a marked resemblance to certain postures of the Javanese dances; Hindu culture has left an imprint on the Visayans, many of whose ancestors, like those of the Javanese, migrated from India.

In the Cagayan Valley the fighting is done with lance and javelin instead of a sword. These the players toss about, weaving a dance pattern in its way as stirring as the conventional fight in Bontoc war dances. Winged horses carry the gallant knights who rescue princesses, and often the play ends with the hero and the ever-blameless heroine riding on the back of a wooden, winged horse.

No wonder the countryfolk love the *moro-moro,* with its appeal to eye and ear, its clash of cymbals and stirring martial music. Besides, the verses are sometimes genuine poetry and some of the Islands' loveliest songs today originated in the *comedia.* Many a rustic lover in Spanish times serenaded his lady with lyrics first sung in *moro-moros.*

A few years ago students of the Baguio branch of the University of the Philippines decided to present an episode from a *moro-moro.* One came forward with a lengthy, typewritten manuscript —*moro-moros* are rarely printed—the work of an Ilokano. From this was taken a scene between the Christian prince, Lucerio, attended by his clown, and the dashing Moorish princess and enchantress, Ermelinda, and a student actor was found who had played the prince's part in a provincial performance.

At first his costume was a problem, for the traditional, elaborate suit of gold-trimmed velvet would require expensive material and tailoring. Then someone, who had gone to Ilokos for a week-end, returned with a prince's costume lent by a village actor. It was a gorgeous suit of deep red, with epaulets and knee breeches, and the worn places would never show on the stage.

For the bright-eyed girl who played Ermelinda, Colosita Lambinicio, a beautiful costume, correct in every detail, was made. The skirt was a flaming scarlet laden with sparkling sequins, and the wide-spreading headdress was brave with tinsel and ribands. Colosita not only acted the enchantress charmingly but worked out and perfected the sword-play and directed the musicians.

The love-stricken Lucerio woos her in a lulling, sentimental singsong. She, however, unsheathing her property sword, challenges him to battle for trespassing upon her forest. The music strikes up, and gracefully but spiritedly they cross weapons. But her heart is only half in the duel, and soon the prince strikes her sword out of her relaxed grip. Love vows are exchanged, and off they march to a lively military air, followed by the capering clown. Though they laughed at the crude old play, the sophisticated people of Baguio were also deeply touched, as it recalled memories of days in the barrio.

Moro-moro literature sometimes furnished material for shadow plays or *carrillos.* In the latter part of the nineteenth century two *carrillo* theatres existed in Manila at different times. One of

these, according to Hernández, was only a vacant lot surrounded by a fence.

A platform and the necessary screen had been placed at one end. In the space in front were the people, seated or standing on various kinds of benches and stools. There men and women smoked, chewed *buyo*, ate oranges, peanuts, and hard-boiled eggs while the play was in progress.

The most ambitious production of this puppet theatre was the *Don Juan Tenorio* of Zorrilla, a happy-go-lucky presentation that outraged the narrow, humorless Spanish historian, Barrantes.

The manipulator of the silhouettes stood under a platform made, like the floors of nipa huts, of inch-wide pieces of satin-smooth bamboo with spaces for ventilation between them. Through these openings he operated the figures above him by means of sticks attached to their bodies and arms, speaking for each in an appropriate tone and often improvising dialogue as he went along.

In the provinces, on moonless nights after the harvest, the *carrillo* became one of the most popular forms of entertainment, especially in Calamba, birthplace of the incomparable José Rizal (1861-1896), who enthralled young and old with his witty, impromptu dialogue and deft manipulation of the silhouettes. During the early years of the American Occupation, the cardboard figures were replaced by live actors, throwing their shadows on the screen in the open air.

The forebear of the *moro-moro* was evidently a performance of an original play by Friar Jerónimo Pérez in the mother house of the Society of Jesus at Manila on July 5, 1637. The novitiates of the order, Spaniards and Filipinos, participated in this performance, given to celebrate the victory of General Hurtado de Corcuera in Mindanao over the Moros. But the more immediate ancestor of the *moro-moro* was a war dance enacted by four or six Christianized Moros on April 28, 1750, in honor of the baptism of their king, Ali Mudin.

The much-loved faërie element of the *comedia* was added afterwards; and the abstract foe in the dance was later identified with unconverted Moslems, such as the Moors who overran southern Spain, for chivalric tales of the Crusades and of Spain's battles against the Moors were early translated into the native dialects by priests and welcomed eagerly. Real clashes between Christians and Moros in the southern Philippines had appar-

ently little or no influence, since the *moro-moro* actors remained in the realm of fantasy and never portrayed existing types of people.

In contrast to the *moro-moro,* local drama in Spanish was not established until the arrival of Governor General Claveria in 1844. Heretofore, all plays had been given under the stars, but in 1846, with Claveria's encouragement, an orthodox theatre was built and opened in the crowded Binondo district of Manila, on what was to become the Street of Comedy. Set among houses and made of cool but inflammable nipa palm, it was destroyed four years later by a fire that swept the district. When the theatre was rebuilt, the governor forbade the construction of nipa houses near it.

At first the Binondo Theatre lost money. The plays presented were in Spanish, a language only partially understood, and it lacked actors of sufficient talent to offset this handicap. It closed in 1848 because the political trouble then agitating Spain might easily have led to partisan interpretations and started a riot.

Having exchanged the former director, Bosch, for the progressive Narciso de la Escosura, the theatre reopened in the same year. Under Escosura productions reached a high level. He imported from Madrid the famous actress, Carlota Coronel, engaged gifted Filipino actors, and introduced changes in the stage and even in the technique of local playwriting. He also made the Binondo available to touring companies, such as the Spanish troupe of López Ariza, which ventured the long ocean trip and delighted Manila in 1852. Though this theatre continued to give plays in Spanish, it stimulated the development of native drama.

After Escosura's time the Binondo again deteriorated. This encouraged the erection of many small, rival theatres, which gave not only plays but vaudeville and ballets danced by Spanish troupes. By 1860 Manila had no less than five playhouses: those of Binondo and Tondo, the short-lived theatre of Sibacan, a theatre in Quiapo (first used by a French opera company), and the Teatro del Principe Alfonso. When visiting Spanish and Italian actors and a Chinese company led to the building of even more theatres, Governor Lara was obliged to limit their number.

In 1893 was opened the famous Zorrilla Theatre, named for the author of *Don Juan Tenorio.* It immediately became the fashionable playhouse of the gay Spanish community. Languid

black eyes stole glances over swaying fans at doting caballeros. A few years later many of those dashing swains lay boloed on Island battlefields, and the proud Zorrilla Theatre echoed to the wild shouts of a rebellious people, undamming the emotions of three hundred cringing years.

The final revolt against Spain had begun. As soon as Luzon was liberated, a revolutionary government was set up in Malolos, Bulacan, and for a brief time the Filipinos breathed the air of freedom. Then came the Spanish-American War, and the Islands passed under the rule of the United States. But some determined patriots refused to accept this new domination and strove to incite another revolution. Among this group were Juan Cruz Matapang, Pascual Poblete, Juan Abad, Pedro Paterno, Tomás Remigio, Vicente Sotto, Panteleón López, and Aurelio Tolentino. Knowing the power of the stage, they set themselves to writing propaganda plays in the Tagalog dialect, patterned upon the Spanish *zarzuela*. Feverishly the pieces were rehearsed and presented at the Zorrilla Theatre to responsive audiences, unmindful of frequent raids by the police.

One of these was *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (*Kahapon, Ngayon, at Bukas*), a drama in which the people make and then carry out threats of revolution, ending in complete victory over the Americans. Its author, Aurelio Tolentino, was imprisoned. Later he wrote a bitter play, *Tagalog Tears* (*Luhang Tagalog*), about an independent Philippines invaded by a foreign power. During the ensuing struggle the characters split into two parties, one wishing to fight to the end, the other favoring autonomy under the invader. The plot concluded, like history, in the subjugation of the Filipinos.

In *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,* by an ingenious bit of stage direction, a thrilling and subtle effect was gained. It was, of course, forbidden to display the Philippine flag in those tempestuous times; but some of the actors were costumed in such a way that when, at a given signal, they took certain positions, they formed the flag for an instant. The audience was quick to perceive the device and went wild with delight, much to the puzzlement of the American spectators. In another play the well-known actor, Carvajal, daringly shot at a stuffed American eagle. He and the rest of the cast were thrown in jail.

Perhaps the most stirring of all the anti-American plays, and

certainly the most effective in its denouement, is *I Am Not Dead (Hindi Aco Patay)*, by Juan Cruz Matapang. Its plot is allegorical:

> Karaganlan (Dignity, representing the natural wealth and riches of the Islands) is sought in marriage by Macamcam (Covetous, the American government in Manila) and also by Tangulan (Defense, a loyal—that is, insurgent—native). Ualanghinayan (Pitiless, native scout under American orders), her brother, has sold himself to Macamcam, and urges his sister to marry the latter. She refuses, having pledged herself to Tangulan. Eventually he [Tangulan] and Macamcam fight a duel (battle between the American and Filipino forces), and Tangulan is left on the field, shot through and mortally wounded. Macamcam sends to Washington for his father, Maimbot (Avaricious, the United States), who comes to see his son married, as it is by his wish that the young man has undertaken to win the girl. Meantime, vague rumors have been bruited about that Tangulan's ghost has assumed command of a large force of desperate natives, advancing to destroy the force of Macamcam, and the latter is much disturbed. However, the girl is forced into the marriage, and the ceremony is proceeding, when the funeral procession of Tangulan passes the door of Karaganlan's house. As the catafalque arrives, Tangulan springs up, bolo in hand, with the shout: Hindi aco patay! The Americans are seized and disarmed, and the lovers united, the play thus ending happily, while Macamcam and Maimbot decide to "wait until another day" before attempting again to execute their nefarious plans.[7]

Little by little protests against American rule were abandoned, and Filipino playwrights began to produce genuine *zarzuelas*. At its best the *zarzuela*, with its jokes, its dancing, and its singing, resembles a good revue. Everyone, from heroine down to the lowliest servant, bursts frequently into song; encores are many, and the plot is tenuous and naïve. Usually a mercenary father supplies the obstacle to true love, and the moral is brought home to even the thickest heads.

The persistent popularity of the *moro-moro* prompted Severino Reyes, a favorite author of *zarzuelas*, to strive to show that one could find pleasure in plays which had in them not a single combat between Moslems and Christians. And, indeed, he wrote several, containing catchy songs and vulgar jests, that took Manila by storm.

His *Martyrs of the Country*, a bitter arraignment of the Spaniards interspersed with singing and love-making, has the conclusion of a fourteenth-century miracle play. Filipino soldiers are executed by Spaniards behind a curtain. When the curtain

[7] A. S. Riggs, "The Drama of the Filipinos," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XVII (1904), 284.

goes up, the corpses are revealed. Spaniards enter, laughing and shouting in triumph. The dead hero's mother cries, "Your victims will go to Heaven, and you, wicked people, will be condemned to hell!" An obliging devil promptly appears and drags the Spaniards away. Then the souls of the dead martyrs are led by angels onto the stage on their way to Heaven. The rest of the cast sings a hymn to the martyrs as the curtain falls.

Another of Reyes' plays, written before 1906, has the arresting title, *The Sale of the Philippines to Japan.* It is a comic opera in two acts centering around a rumor that the United States has agreed to sell the Islands to Japan. A jolly debate upon national anthems ends with each character humming his favorite. One character suggests that not only the United States but eight other nations as well be given a protectorate over the Islands, so that all may divide the pie. Later an American speaks seriously and a bit pompously on the good intentions of his country. He admits that it erred in trying to make the Philippines into a miniature United States by introducing American methods in the construction of office buildings, bridges, and streets, since the natives are too poor to pay for them; and he recommends that America abandon the Islands at once. A Filipino patriot speaks last, voicing the belief that the United States will grant the Islands their independence and lauding freedom above all.

In spite of its crude sentimentality, the *zarzuela* occasionally touched upon topics of the day. Among the subjects treated by the few dramatists who looked about them were the mercenary attitude toward dowries, the relations between capital and labor, cockfighting, the centuries-old monopoly of trade enjoyed by local Chinese, the corruption of native politicians, the shortcomings of the Philippine theatre itself, and many of the native customs.

Of the plays of social protest one of the most significant is *In the Jaws of the Shark* by Julián Balmaceda.[8] Like Hung Shen's modern Chinese drama, *Wu K'uei Bridge,* this play concerns poor farmers and their oppressors. The peasants are victimized by a hard-hearted usurer. At the end justice, aided by a rural credit association, triumphs.

Sometimes prominent citizens were impersonated. In the biting satire, *The Sunkit Family at Malacañang (Las de Sunkit en*

[8] Balmaceda's play and the two by Reyes are in Tagalog. Mrs. Eilades was unable to supply their original titles.—Ed.

Malacañang), by the Spaniard, Jesús Balmori, presented at Manila in 1936, a number of well-known figures in the city's official, social, and commercial circles were unsparingly ridiculed. With sharp, and often obscene, wit Batikuling (Balmori's pen name) lashed at the petty vanities, pretensions, social ambitions, foibles, and stupidities of those seeking an invitation to Malacañang, residence of the President.

Among the first *zarzuela* troupes was one formed in 1900 by Fabiana Gerónimo and Hermógenes Ilagan, popular Tagalog writer. It consisted of nine members, Fabiana being the only woman. Highly capable, she was at once leading lady, manager, and treasurer. The company staged Patricio Mariano's *Sampaguita* for four hundred pesos, and Fabiana received the comparatively high salary of forty pesos (about $20) for her acting in that operetta. The other members received a small salary at the end of the year, plus a share in the profits if there were any. They drew money for their daily expenses from a special fund. Small audiences soon forced them to find additional means of support, and thus they often failed to appear for a performance. It was not surprising that Fabiana's troupe was short lived.

City *zarzuela* companies toured the provinces but learned to avoid the rice-transplanting season, for the strenuous work of stoop-and-plant, stoop-and-plant under a tropic sun left men, women, and children with no desire for playgoing. Noteworthy is the troupe of veteran actors sent out in recent years to Batangas and neighboring provinces to promote the sale of La Dicha cigars and cigarettes by giving free performances. Trained by Ilagan, their acting far excelled that of regular professional companies and was an inspiration to local amateurs.

This sponsorship by a prosperous firm gave the troupe a stability not enjoyed by the many independent, non-subsidized groups. Of these Severino Reyes' company, organized in 1902, was the most enduring. Some of Don Severino's actors had been *moro-moro* players, but his direction helped them to outgrow the extreme artificiality and pomposity which the *comedia* style of acting had ingrained in them.

While the *zarzuela* flourished principally in Manila, it was also popular and firmly established in some of the provinces. The people of Ilokos love the theatre, as we have seen, especially dwellers in historic old Vigan, capital of Ilokos Sur. There at

the huge fiesta on the third of May many districts compete for honors in presenting either a *zarzuela* or a *moro-moro*.

An outdoor stage is constructed of bamboo and wood. As in the Chinese drama, there are two doors at the back, one for entrance and one for exit. Little is done in the way of settings, though pictures of national heroes or other great men are hung on the rear wall. The audience mills about on three sides of the stage, there being nothing to obstruct the view of persons on the sides. Those at a distance sit on the springy seat of a carromata, or perch on a truck. Some put their own chairs in front of the platform one or two days before the show. Rarely is a chair lost.

In Cagayan, prior to the War, there was much enthusiasm for melodramas written by native sons in their dialect, Ibanag. In 1932 a new play, *Emigdio,* was presented with zest by citizens of Aparri. Painters and carpenters volunteered to make the stage, and expenses were borne by voluntary contributions. The play tells how Emigdio, like the much-admired Ishmael of fiction, rises to success through his industry and virtue. This motif is still very popular in the Islands, for under the Spanish regime a poor boy had not the ghost of a chance to improve himself.

One would not expect a country to develop a national theatre as long as its people speak a variety of dialects. Now that English is taught in the schools, the great majority of Filipino youth understand it very well and local dramatists have a common tongue in which to present plays of Filipino life.

Until recently few such plays of any merit have come from the schools and colleges themselves, the chief centers of culture in the Islands. One reason was the popularity of declamations, delivered with stilted gestures conned from some nineteenth-century guide on elocution. But with the introduction of a new textbook, *A Book of Makebelieve,* into the high schools some years ago, tastes began to improve.

Perhaps the custom which has done the most harm to the growth of Filipino drama has been the insistence of school authorities that a patriotic holiday be celebrated with a play written to order. Prizes were offered for the best play suitable for National Heroes' Day, Rizal Day, and similar occasions. Those competing raked up history, put heroic words in the mouths of too perfect heroes, and brought down their curtain upon platitudes mingled with the cannon fire of some revolutionary battle off-stage. Shin-

ing exceptions to the usual patrio-historical drivel and bombast are a well-knit, powerful little tragedy in English by Evangelina Abellera, called *The Papers*, and Vidal Tan's compelling playlets adapted from that great novel by José Rizal, *The Social Cancer* (*Noli me Tangere*).

Playwriting was at one time taught at the State University by Ambassador Carlos Rómulo, himself the author of entertaining well-made farces. Since then a number of interesting plays have been written in the composition and drama courses there. One of the best is *Half an Hour in a Convent* by Wilfrido Guerrero, a former student of mine who is now devoting his entire time to the theatre and has become the most widely produced of present-day Filipino dramatists. Others are Lilia Villa's *Educating Josefina,* a play about provincial youth educated in Manila, who return home to scorn the simple ways of their kinsfolk; Francisco Rodrigo's *I Bet on the Red Cock, on the White,* a revealing comedy of the cockpit; Julia Palarca's *Other Tomorrows,* and Feliciana del Espíritu Santo's *Awakening,* each dealing seriously with Filipino life; Guerrero's *Women Are Extraordinary* and Domingo Nolasco's *Help Wanted,* well-constructed little comedies popular with student dramatic clubs; two plays by Pablo Hidalgo, *Manuel's Daughter* and *At the Turn of the Road,* treating the country-wide problem of poor peasants determined to educate at least one of their children; Guerrero's *Hate Begins* and S. Formoso's *He Married a Gambler,* both effective dramatizations of a family crisis arising from ignorance or bigotry.[9]

It is but natural for a people educated in a borrowed tongue, reading American magazines, listening to American films and radio programs, to disdain the simple ways of their forefathers. While president of the State University, Dr. Jorge Bocobo crusaded for the preservation and appreciation of national arts and customs. Filipino folk-dancing was sympathetically studied and faithfully reproduced at the University. Dance directors and musicians of the University spent summer vacations in remote provinces, recording dance-figures and music. Later their students reproduced the dances in the traditional costume to the accompaniment of the original primitive music. These performances

[9] The first seven of these plays are printed in my *Short Plays of the Philippines* (Manila 1940). The rest are still unpublished. All of them are in English.

have helped to revive interest among thinking Filipinos in their native arts.

Also, the State University has improved standards of play production by the appointment of experienced directors. Formerly the students directed their own plays, and, though their enthusiasm was always great, their productions were often slipshod. The director was usually the leading actor. In moments of stress he was not above crouching under the uplifted curtain and signaling to the musicians with frantic gestures, while the audience tried to look the other way. Under faculty directorship such crude marks of amateurism have, of course, disappeared.

A number of secondary-school teachers have taken the university's play-production course and returned to their profession equipped to avoid the blunders that one sees in many a provincial performance. Several Manila student groups have toured the towns of Luzon with plays in English, thus giving Filipinos outside the capital the opportunity of witnessing productions which were, with all their faults, better prepared than the usual local ones.

All of this theatrical activity ceased when the Japanese occupied the Islands. Troops, quartered at the State University, stripped the property room of its costumes and newly purchased back-drapes, and burned all the books in the Library. The last play given at the University before Pearl Harbor was *Mr. Pim Passes By,* a production noteworthy for the fine performance of Fidel Sicam in the role of George. Two weeks later one of the actresses in this production died in the sinking of the steamer *Corregidor,* which hit a mine in Manila Bay as it started south, crowded with Visayans trying to get home.

The motion-picture houses, however, remained open, showing American films, rigidly censored, as well as Filipino products. In the first months of the Japanese occupation thousands of restless, worried people flocked to Manila. Many of them sought a few hours of forgetfulness and relaxation in the darkened theatres. They demanded more than a double feature. They wanted singing and dancing, vaudeville and melodrama. Stages were hastily enlarged to make space for live actors. A number of student players and school dramatic directors, encouraged by the demand for entertainers, turned professional. Even old-time

performers, like Katy de la Cruz, who had been relegated to the cheapest theatres, came back into public favor.

Since English dialogue was forbidden, one group of actors translated into Tagalog and presented three one-act plays, among them Guerrero's *Women Are Extraordinary*. Another group, recently students, produced several hurriedly written melodramas. But these rather highbrow efforts were not financially successful. War-weary Filipino audiences were in no mood to concentrate on serious drama.

During this unhappy time some stage artists showed great courage and fortitude in continuing their work. Among these was Sonia Rifkin, Russian-born resident of Manila. She gathered around her young persons, chiefly European, who shared her devotion to the theatre, and with their assistance gave small, private productions through three years of increasing hardships. Every few months until the antiquated transportation system of Manila broke down completely, friends were invited to unpublicized, and therefore uncensored, performances in her large *sala*. Scenes from *Peer Gynt* and *Liliom* brought pleasure to art-starved Filipinos, Jews, Spaniards, and other non-interned peoples.

This is the spirit that will encourage Filipino dramatists to write again for the stage. What kind of plays will come from their uncensored pens? They are young and still learning their craft, but they will have a tale worth listening to. From its roots in the centuries-old Passion Play, the naïve *moro-moro*, and the gay *zarzuela*, slowly but certainly a Philippine National Theatre will emerge.

THE EQUITY-LIBRARY THEATRE: ITS AIM AND ACHIEVEMENT

by

GEORGE FREEDLEY

The Equity-Library Theatre came into existence in 1943 because there was a definite need for it. Actors were trained by the three hundred-odd university and college drama departments and were then sent to Broadway without contacts being made for them with the managers or agents, their potential employers or representatives. Young men and women frequently got their earliest training in the thousands of little or community playhouses scattered throughout the country. After several years' work they often developed a real proficiency, and some of them began to think of acting as a vocation rather than as just fun. There are a number of theatre schools in the country, as well as those centered in New York and Hollywood, which train for the theatre on a professional basis. Schools of this category are. perhaps, better served in managers' offices than either of the other two groups, because they are usually run by professionals who have many contacts in the commercial theatre and so are in a position to advance their graduates' interests.

One of the best outlets for the aspiring young amateur was the shows done in the little theatres outside the Broadway area. The Provincetown Playhouse, which had once been a professional theatre in the sense that it housed the Provincetown Players, had become such a showcase. The Blackfriars' and the tiny Cherry Lane Theatre were others. Hunter College in New York possessed an auditorium which was rented for outside performances, as was the Barbizon Plaza Hotel theatre. Finally, the Dramatic Workshop of the New School for Social Research had an active producing program under the direction of Erwin Piscator.

None of these theatres employed stage hands, and either did not pay their actors or paid them less than Equity minimum salaries. Many persons in the theatre had begun to believe that

though these producing enterprises were not "rackets," in some instances they were attempting to compete with the Broadway theatre. They were placing advertisements in the local newspapers and were seeking theatre "parties." In fact, actors were being asked to compete with themselves, at no salaries or at very low ones.

For this reason and to secure an entry into these organizations, the technical unions insisted upon employment of their members. On Broadway there is a committee of the craft unions known as the Fact-Finding Committee. This is the group that makes claims for the technical forces in the theatre and that assigns the number of people to be employed by any enterprise. The Fact-Finding Committee finally persuaded Equity to back them up in their demands for the hire of union members, by declaring the six houses "unfair" and, therefore, on a kind of blacklist.

This meant, of course, that no actor who was a union member could play, a tremendous handicap to these theatres. The fact that they have survived at all has been largely due to incoming amateurs, and to members of AFRA (American Federation of Radio Artists), AGMA (American Guild of Musical Artists), and AGVA (American Guild for Variety Artists), who were allowed to act under their auspices. Their standards of production dropped, however, and they found it difficult to find playwrights who would allow their plays to be performed under what they considered inferior conditions. Thus, to all intents and purposes, these six little theatres were closed. Agents, managers and drama critics, for the most part, either did not cover the performances at all or went less frequently.

After almost a year of this deplorable situation, during which Sam Jaffe and I had been discussing the plight of the young actor, an idea came to us simultaneously. We were lunching one day when Mr. Jaffe said, "I believe that I can persuade the Council of Actors' Equity Association to allow trial performances to show off actors, if we can only find a place in which to perform."

I replied, "Why not make use of the theatres in the branches of the New York Public Library? We have a dozen of these, which were constructed along very simple lines by the Works Progress Administration in 1937. They have been used mainly by local groups for performances as well as for meetings. Per-

haps the Library would make them available to some such project as you have in mind."

Such was the beginning of ELT. The Library and Equity entered into an agreement whereby plays might be performed free of admission charge before neighborhood audiences, and also before the managers and agents we hoped to attract. For we wanted the young players to be seen so that when they went to a manager's office, they would not be turned away with "Sorry, I have never seen you act. I can't take anybody I've never seen."

Mr. Jaffe selected from Equity an excellent committee with which to work, including Aline MacMahon, Margaret Webster, the late Dudley Digges, Alexander Clark, Ruth Hammond, John Kennedy, Philip Loeb, Clarence Derwent and Walter Greaza. Esther Johnston, now Chief of the Library's Circulation Department, Anna Glantz, in charge of public relations there, and I undertook to handle the Library side of the project. We provided without charge the theatres, light and heat, and what equipment the theatres possessed. Each Library theatre had a double-sided unit set of screens with the standard number of doors and windows, switchboards, and a limited number of spotlights and striplights, as well as curtains and drapes. The stages were small.

I well remember a hot summer day when Aline MacMahon, Sam Jaffe and I rode on the West Side subway from branch to branch of the Library to inspect the theatres. We journeyed from the Hudson Park Branch in lower Greenwich Village to the Fort Washington Branch at the extreme end of upper Manhattan. By the end of our tiring trip both Miss MacMahon and Mr. Jaffe were convinced that we really had theatres suitable for the undertaking.

On February 20, 1944, the curtains parted for the first time on an Equity-Library Theatre show, J. M. Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* and Noel Coward's *Fumed Oak*. Between that date and June 1, when Library vacation schedules and the extreme heat and airlessness of converted basements forced the closing of ELT for the summer, five more productions, including *Hamlet*, had been given.

In the early fall of 1944, realizing that we needed some kind of budget to keep the project in operation, Mr. Jaffe, Walter Greaza and I approached John Golden and asked for a donation

of $1,000 from the John Golden Theatre Fund, which he had set up to assist in financing worthy theatrical projects. Until that time the actors and director, most of whom did not have money to spare, had had to finance each production themselves. The donation from Mr. Golden made it possible to allow a budget of $50 for each modern play presented and $75 for those requiring costumes. Since all of the plays chosen for performance had to be revivals, so that ELT might not be turned into a try-out theatre, many of the productions were, naturally, of older plays. Classics could also be given even if they had not formerly been produced professionally; but, with this exception, a professional performance somewhere in this country was a prerequisite for any play under consideration.

Mr. Golden continued largely to finance ELT until its temporary suspension in October 1947. The money allotted, however, to any single production in almost no instance covered the cost, and so it was necessary for the persons participating in it to find funds elsewhere. This was the only unpleasant part of the project, because it meant that the participants frequently went without necessities to see their production through to conclusion. Nevertheless, the actors felt, and rightly so, that the sacrifice was beneficial to them professionally. A large number of them found jobs on Broadway, in USO shows and in summer theatres.

In the season of 1944-1945 thirty-four productions were given. Some of them were outstanding and included: Irwin Shaw's *The Sky and Lonely,* Saroyan's *Hello, Out There,* Barrie's *Mary Rose,* Chekhov's *The Sea Gull, Measure for Measure, The Wild Duck,* Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour,* Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* (first performance since 1905) and Crista Winsloe's *Maedchen in Uniform.* During this season the Equity Council broadened its regulations by allowing one fifth of the members of each cast to be non-Equity. This opened the door of the professional theatre a little wider to amateurs from college and community stages and increased the registration of actors, directors and designers in ELT to more than one thousand persons a year.

In the next season the total number of productions jumped to forty-eight. On November 7, 1945, Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was shown in a fiftieth anniversary celebration. Other revivals were: Heijermans' *The Good Hope,* a famous old

play in which Ellen Terry had once starred: Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts,* not seen on Broadway for sixty years: Mordaunt Shairp's *The Green Bay Tree;* Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound; Ghosts; A Doll's House;* Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters; Othello;* Sherwood's *The Animal Kingdom; The Cherry Orchard;* Machiavelli's *Mandragola,* its first professional production in America; and Dryden's *All for Love,* not performed in New York since 1797. The outstanding production of the year, however, was probably Arthur Schnitzler's *The Affairs of Anatol,* brilliantly directed by Madie Christians, with a splendid cast including Carmen Matthews, Tonio Selwart and Harry Jones.

The 1946-1947 season saw fifty-six productions, the highest number ever given by ELT. Frankly, it seemed to me then, and still seems to me, that we endeavored to do too many plays. The problem of booking so many productions into the Libraries cut the time between them which was necessary for efficient handling of the theatre both from the Library's and from the visiting company's point of view. The fact that ELT did not get under way until late November made for further difficulties. Sam Jaffe's and my absence from the city at the same time placed a heavy burden on the Executive Secretary and also on John Golden, who was then giving a great deal of time to the project. It should be stated here that the Theatre Guild, together with many individuals, most of them friends of Mr. Jaffe, donated approximately $1,500 to the project to pay the salary of the Secretary, who was the entire staff of ELT.

Noteworthy productions of the 1946-1947 season were: W. S. Gilbert's *Engaged,* Wilder's *Our Town,* Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois,* Patrick Hamilton's *Angel Street,* Anderson's *Elizabeth, the Queen,* and Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph.* Others that were highly regarded were James Joyce's *Exiles,* Ansky's *The Dybbuk,* Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* and, especially, Sidney Howard's *Paths of Glory,* which was so well directed by John O'Shaughnessy that he won the assignment of staging William Haines' *Command Decision* on Broadway this fall, and so established himself as one of the best of the younger directors. *Peer Gynt* in a new translation by Dan Dickenson, Ervine's *John Ferguson,* Craven's *The First Year, Much Ado About Nothing,* Maugham's *The Circle,* and *Hedda Gabler* were also admired. But the best production of

the year was, I think, John Reich's staging of Pirandello's *Henry IV* in his own adaptation from the Italian.

The necessity of redecorating, repainting, renovating and, in one instance, reconstructing most of the branch libraries containing the theatres that ELT had been utilizing, forced the suspension of the project for the 1947-1948 season. Equity, with the co-operation and financial assistance of Mr. Golden, is operating a similar project outside the New York Public Library. The Library has agreed to the retention of its name for the season, provided that I remain on the Equity Committee to represent it and that publicity emanating from ELT headquarters is checked with the Library before release. In May a committee representing both Equity and the Library will meet and make plans for the possible resumption of the original Equity-Library Theatre in the fall of 1948.

PORTRAIT OF A PLAYER

by

THOMAS WOLFE

On November 22, 1897, about three years before his death, Joseph Frankau, a retired actor, paid Richard Mansfield a visit at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York. After playing the Marquis in Oscar Hammerstein's comic opera, Santa Maria, *the previous November, Frankau had withdrawn from the stage on account of increasing deafness and was serving as secretary to his brother-in-law, Police Commissioner Jacob Hess. Since the time, ten years before, when he had toured with Mansfield, the two had been close friends. They had not met for some months, and Mansfield had invited him to see his* Richard III, *which he was presenting for one night only.*

Fortunately, Frankau was accompanied by his fourteen-year-old daughter, the future costume and scene designer, Aline Bernstein. I say fortunately, because this meeting with the magnificent Mansfield left such an impression on Mrs. Bernstein's young mind that years afterwards she was able to revive it vividly for Thomas Wolfe. Wolfe, ever interested in the theatre, made of it "a story," which was published posthumously in The Atlantic Monthly *for June* 1939, *under the title, "The Winter of Our Discontent," and later included—with additions and some rearrangement of paragraphs—in the twenty-sixth chapter of his novel,* The Web and the Rock. *"The Winter of Our Discontent" is so fine a portrait of a great actor, backstage and on stage, that the* Theatre Annual *is pleased to reprint it here by permission of Harper & Brothers Publishers* and Mr. Edward C. Aswell, Literary Executor of Thomas Wolfe's Estate.*

Richard Mansfield was not born to greatness on the stage; like Irving, he attained greatness by perseverance and hard work. He studied every part intensively, often practicing for hours before a mirror the delivery of lines, facial expression, and gesture. As a result, he achieved amazing effects—the transformation of Jekyll into Hyde, for example, in full view of the audience. When he as-

* Copyright, 1939, by Maxwell Perkins as Executor.

sumed a character he got inside it and became that person. On his way from his dressing room to the stage, deep in a role, he was always preceded by the call boy, who prevented anyone from speaking to him. Of his Gloucester, an interpretation as revolutionary as Charles Macklin's Shylock, he once said: "I suffer every night all that Richard suffered, and so I am *Richard the King when I play Richard the King." He was proud to the point of arrogance, thin skinned and abnormally upset by criticism, real or imaginary. For the failure of his* Richard III *in England in* 1889 *he blamed Irving, who was blameless, and thereafter disliked him keenly.*

This is the man that Wolfe depicts under the name of Brandell, and his brilliant study is in keeping with all that we know of Mansfield. From Mrs. Bernstein's account of that memorable night at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, he has fashioned an unforgettable picture of an eager-eyed, receptive girl and her weary, disillusioned father in the presence of a powerful, complex personality, a strange blend of genius and charlatanism.

But Wolfe was not writing biography; he took liberties with his material, as any creative artist is justified in doing. It may be of some interest, at least to embryonic stage historians, to point out some of these. Although at times Mansfield claimed descent from the aristocratic Mansfelds of Germany, his father was an English wine merchant, Maurice Mansfield, and he was born, not in Leipzig, but in Berlin, in 1854. *He "started life" as a clerk in Eben Jordan's Boston store, now Jordan Marsh Company. He never played Hamlet, Iago, Macbeth or Richelieu, roles in which Booth had excelled. In his version of* Richard III, *Gloucester is not on stage when the play opens. He enters and speaks his famous soliloquy at the close of the scene. Mansfield did not collapse after his performance of the deformed tyrant in November of* 1897. *On the two following nights he appeared in other parts, and he was not seen again as Gloucester until* 1904. *Before that date his Cyrano de Bergerac* (1898), *Henry V* (1900), *and Monsieur Beaucaire* (1901) *had firmly established his reputation in America.* Editor.

You would have loved Daddy. He was so wild and beautiful, everybody adored him. That was the trouble: things came too easy for him; he never had to work for anything.

The year before Daddy died, Richard Brandell made a production of *Richard III,* and he sent my father tickets for the performance, with a very urgent and excited note asking us to come to see him before the show began. At this time my father had not played in the theatre for almost a year. His deafness had got so bad he could no longer hear his cues, and Uncle Bob had given him a job as his secretary at Police Headquarters. I used to go there to meet him every Saturday—the policemen were very nice to me and gave me bundles of pencils and great packages of fine stationery.

Mr. Brandell had not seen my father for several months. When we got to the theatre we went backstage for a few moments before the curtain. As my father opened the door and went into the dressing room, Brandell turned and sprang out of his chair like a tiger; he threw both arms around my father and embraced him, crying out in a trembling and excited voice as if he were in some great distress of mind and spirit:—

"Choe! Choe! I am glad you have come! It's good to zee you!"

When he was excited he always spoke like this, with a pronounced accent. Although he insisted he was English by birth, he had been born in Leipzig, his father was a German; his real name was Brandl, which he had changed to Brandell after becoming an actor.

He had the most terrific vitality of any man I have ever seen. He was very handsome, but at the moment his features, which were smooth, powerful, and infinitely flexible, were so swollen and distorted by some convulsion of the soul that he looked like a pig. At his best, he was a man of irresistible charm and warmth; he greeted me in a very kind and affectionate way, and kissed me, but he was overjoyed to see my father. He stood for a moment without speaking, grasping him by the arms and shaking him gently; then he began to speak in a bitter voice of "they" and "them." He thought everyone was against him; he kept saying that Daddy was his only friend on earth, and he kept asking in a scornful and yet eager tone:—

"What are *they* saying, Joe? Have you heard *them* talk?"

"All that I've heard," my father said, "is that it's a magnificent performance, and that there's no one on the stage to-day who

can come anywhere near you—no, that there's no one who can touch you, Dick—and that's the way I feel about it, too."

"Not even His Snakeship? Not even His Snakeship?" Mr. Brandell cried, his face livid and convulsed.

We knew he was speaking of Henry Irving and we said nothing. For years, ever since the failure of his tour in England, he had been convinced that Irving was responsible for his failure. He had become obsessed with the idea that almost everyone on earth hated him and was trying to get the best of him, and he seized my father's hand, and, looking very earnestly in his eyes, he said:—

"No, no! You mustn't lie to me! You mustn't fool me! You are the only man on earth I'd trust!"

Then he began to tell us all the things his enemies had done to injure him. He said the stagehands were all against him, that they never got the stage set in time, that the time they took between scenes was going to ruin the production. I think he felt his enemies were paying the crew to wreck the show. Daddy told him this was foolish, that no one would do a thing like that, and Mr. Brandell kept saying:—

"Yes, they would! They hate me! They'll never rest now until they ruin me! *I* know! *I* know!" in a very mysterious manner. "I could tell you things. . . . I know things. . . . You wouldn't believe it if I told you, Joe." Then, in a bitter voice, he said: "Why is it, then, that I've toured this country from coast to coast, playing in a new town every night, and I've never had any trouble like this before? I've had my scenery arrive two hours before the performance and they always set it up for me on time! Yes! They'll do that much for you in any one-horse town! Do you mean to tell me they can't do as well here in New York?"

In a moment he said, in a bitter tone: "I've given my life to the theatre, I've given the public the best that was in me—and what is my reward? The public hates me and I am tricked, betrayed, and cheated by the members of my own profession. I started life as a bank clerk in a teller's cage, and sometimes I curse the evil chance that took me away from it. Yes," he said in a passionate voice, "I should have missed the tinsel, the glitter, and the six-day fame—the applause of a crowd that will forget about you to-morrow, and spit upon you two days later—but I should have gained something priceless—"

"What's that?" my father said.

"The love of a noble woman and the happy voices of the little ones."

"Now I can smell the ham," my father said in a cynical tone. "Why, Dick, they could not have kept you off the stage with a regiment of infantry. You sound like all the actors that ever lived."

"Yes," said Mr. Brandell with an abrupt laugh, "you're right. I was talking like an actor." He bent forward and stared into the mirror of his dressing table. "An actor! Nothing but an actor! 'Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life—and thou no breath at all?' "

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, Dick," my father said. "You've got plenty of breath—I've never known you to run short of it."

"Only an actor!" cried Mr. Brandell, staring into the mirror. "A paltry, posturing, vain, vile, conceited rogue of an actor! An actor—a man who lies and does not know he lies, a fellow who speaks words that better men have written for him, a reader of mash notes from shopgirls and the stage-struck wives of grocery clerks, a fellow who could not go into the butcher's to buy his dog a bone without wondering what appearance he was making. a man who cannot even pass the time of day without acting—an *actor!* Why, by God, Joe," he cried, turning to my father, "when I look into the glass and see my face I hate the sight of it!"

"Where's that ham?" said Daddy, sniffing about the place.

"An actor!" Mr. Brandell said again. "A man who has imitated so many feelings that he no longer has any of his own! Why, Joe," he said, in a whispering voice, "do you know that when the news came to me that my own mother was dead, I had a moment—yes, I think I really had a moment—of genuine sorrow. Then I ran to look at my face in the mirror, and I cursed because I was not on the stage where I could show it to an audience. An actor! A fellow who has made so many faces he no longer knows his own—a collection of false faces! . . . What would you like, my dear?" he said to me ironically. "Hamlet?"—instantly he looked the part. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?"—here his face went through two marvelous transformations: one moment he was a benevolent-looking gentleman, and the next the deformed and horrible-looking monster. "Richelieu?"—all at once he looked like a crafty and sinister old man. "Beau Brum-

mell?"—he was young, debonair, arrogant, and a fop. "The Duke of Gloucester?"—and in a moment he had transformed himself into the cruel and pitiless villain he was to portray that night.

It was uncanny and fascinating; and there was something horrible in it, too. It was as if he were possessed by a powerful and fluent energy which had all been fed into this wonderful and ruinous gift of mimicry: a gift which may have, as he said, destroyed and devoured his proper self, since one got fleeting and haunting glimpses between these transformations of a man—a sense, an intuition, rather than a memory, of what the man was like and looked like—a sense of a haunted, lost, and lonely spirit which looked out with an insistent, mournful, and speechless immutability through all the hundred changes of his mask.

It seemed to me there was a real despair, a real grief, in Mr. Brandell. I think he had been tormented, like my father, by the eternal enigma of the theatre: its almost impossible grandeur and magnificence, its poetry and its magic which are like nothing else on earth; and the charlatanism and cheapness with which it corrupts its people. Richard Brandell was not only the greatest actor I have ever seen upon the stage, he was also a man of the highest quality. He possessed almost every gift a great actor should possess. And yet his spirit was disfigured as if by an ineradicable taint—a taint which he felt and recognized, as a man might recognize the action of a deadly poison in his blood without being able either to cure or to control it.

He had an astounding repertory of plays which ranged all the way from the great music of *Hamlet* to grotesque and melodramatic trash which he had commissioned some hired hack to write for him, and he would use his great powers in these parts with as much passion and energy as he used in his wonderful portrayals of Iago, Gloucester, or Macbeth. Like most men who are conscious of something false and corrupt in them, he had a kind of Byronic scorn and self-contempt. He was constantly discovering that what he thought had been a deep and honest feeling was only the posturings of his own vanity, a kind of intoxication of self-love, an immense romantic satisfaction at the spectacle of himself having such a feeling; and while his soul twisted about in shame, he would turn and mock and jeer himself and his fellow actors bitterly.

That night was the last time Mr. Brandell ever saw my father. Just before we left he turned to me, took me by the hand, and said very simply and earnestly: "Esther, earn your living in the sweat of your brow, if you have to; go down on your hands and knees and scrub floors, if you have to; eat your bread in sorrow, if you have to—but promise me you will never attempt to go on the stage."

"I have already made her promise that," my father said.

"Is she as good as she's pretty? Is she smart?" said Mr. Brandell, still holding my hand and looking at me.

"She's the smartest girl that ever lived," my father said. "She's so smart she should have been my son."

"And what is she going to do?" said Mr. Brandell, still looking at me.

"She's going to do what I could never do," my father said. He lifted his great hands before him and shook them suddenly in a gesture of baffled desperation. "She's going to take hold of something!" Then he took my hands in his and said: "Not to want the whole earth, and to get nothing! Not to want to do everything, and to do nothing! Not to waste her life dreaming about India when India is around her here and now! Not to go mad thinking of a million lives, wanting the experience of a million people, when everything she has is in the life she's got! Not to be a fool, tortured with hunger and thirst when the whole earth is groaning with its plenty. . . . My dear child," my father cried, "you are so good, so beautiful, and so gifted, and I love you so much! I want you to be happy and to have a wonderful life." He spoke these words with such simple and urgent feeling that all the strength and power in him seemed to go out through his great hands to me, as if all of the energy of his life had been put into his wish.

"Why, Dick," he said to Mr. Brandell, "this child was born into the world with more wisdom than either of us will ever have. She can go into the Park and come back with a dozen kinds of leaves and study them for days. And when she gets through she will know all about them. She knows their size, their shape and color—she knows every marking on them; she can draw them from memory. Could you draw a leaf, Dick? Do you know the pattern and design of a single leaf? Why, I have looked at forests, I have walked through woods and gone across the con-

tinent in trains, I have stared the eyes out of my head trying to swallow up the whole earth at a glance—and I hardly know one leaf from another. I could not draw a leaf from memory if my life depended on it. And she can go out on the street and tell you later what clothes the people were, and what kind of people wore them. Can you remember anyone you passed by on the street today? I walk the streets, I see the crowds, I look at a million faces until my brain goes blind and dizzy with all that I have seen, and later all the faces swim and bob about like corks in water. I can't tell one from the other. I see a million faces and I can't remember one. But she sees one and remembers a million. That's the thing, Dick. If I were young again I'd try to live like that: I'd try to see a forest in a leaf, the whole earth in a single face."

"Why, Esther," Mr. Brandell said. "Have you discovered a new country? How does one get to this wonderful place where you live?"

"Well, I tell you, Mr. Brandell," I said. "It's easy. You just walk out in the street and look around and there you are."

"There you are!" Mr. Brandell said. "Why, my dear child, I have been walking out and looking around for almost fifty years, and the more I walk and look, the less I see that I care to look at. What are these wonderful sights that you have found?"

"Well, Mr. Brandell," I said, "sometimes it's a leaf, and sometimes it's the pocket of a coat, and sometimes it's a button or a coin, and sometimes it's an old hat, or an old shoe on the floor. Sometimes it's a little boy, and sometimes it's a girl looking out a window, and sometimes it's an old woman with a funny hat. Sometimes it's the color of an ice wagon, and sometimes the color of an old brick wall, and sometimes a cat creeping along the back-yard fence. Sometimes it's the feet of the men on the rail when you pass a saloon, and the sawdust floors, and the sound of their voices, and that wonderful smell you get of beer and orange peel and angostura bitters. Sometimes it's people passing underneath your window late at night, and sometimes it's the sound of a horse in the street early in the morning, and sometimes it's the ships blowing out in the harbor at night.

"Sometimes it's the way you feel at night when you wake up in wintertime and you know it's snowing, although you can't see or hear it. Sometimes it's the harbor, sometimes the docks, and

sometimes it's the Bridge with people coming across it. Sometimes it's the markets and the way the chickens smell: sometimes it's all the new vegetables and the smell of apples. Sometimes it's the people in a train that passes the one you're in: you see all the people, you are close to them, but you cannot touch them: you say good-bye to them and it makes you feel sad. Sometimes it's all the kids playing in the street: they don't seem to have anything to do with the grown-ups, they seem to be kids, and yet they seem to be grown up and to live in a world of their own—there is something strange about it. And sometimes it's like that with the horses too—sometimes you go out and there is nothing but the horses; they fill the streets, you forget about all the people; the horses seem to own the earth; they talk to one another, and they seem to have a life of their own that people have nothing to do with. I know all about this and what is going on inside them, but it's no use telling you and Daddy—you wouldn't know what I was talking about. Well—there's a lot more —do you give up?"

"Good God, yes!" said Mr. Brandell, picking up a towel from his dressing table and waving it at me. "I surrender! O brave new world that has such wonders in it! . . . O, Joe, Joe!" he said to my father. "Will that ever happen to us again? Are we nothing but famished beggars, weary of our lives? Can you still see all those things when you walk the streets? Would it ever come back to us that way again?"

"Not to me," my father said. "I was a Sergeant, but I've been rejuced."

He smiled as he spoke, but his voice was old and tired and weary. I know now he felt that his life had failed. His face had got very yellow from his sickness, and his shoulders stooped, his great hands dangled to his knees; as he stood there between Mr. Brandell and me he seemed to be half-erect, as if he had just clambered up from all fours. And yet his face was as delicate and wild as it had ever been; it had the strange, soaring look—as if it were in constant flight away from a shackling and degrading weight—that it had always worn, and to this expression of uplifted flight there had now been added the intent listening expression that all deaf people have.

It seemed to me that the sense of loneliness and exile, of a brief and alien rest, as if some winged spirit had temporarily

arrested flight upon a foreign earth, was more legible on him now than it had ever been. Suddenly I felt all the strangeness of his life and destiny—his remoteness from all the life I knew. And I felt more than ever before a sense of our nearness and farness; I felt at once closer to him than to anyone on earth, and at the same time farther from him. Already his life had something fabulous and distant in it; he seemed to be a part of some vanished and irrevocable time.

I do not think Mr. Brandell had noticed before how tired and ill my father looked. He had been buried in his own world, burning with a furious, half-suppressed excitement, an almost mad vitality which was to have that night its consummation. Before we left him, however, he suddenly glanced sharply and critically at my father, took his hand, and said with great tenderness:—

"What is it, Joe? You look so tired. Is anything wrong?"

My father shook his head. He had become very sensitive about his deafness, and any reference to the affliction that had caused his retirement from the stage or any suggestion of pity from one of his former colleagues because of his present state deeply wounded him. "Of course not," he said. "I never felt better! I used to be Joe the Dog-Faced Actor, now I'm Joe the Dog-Faced Policeman, and I've got a badge to prove it, too." Here he produced his policeman's badge, of which he was really very proud. "If that's not a step up in the world, what is it? Come on, daughter," he said to me. "Let's leave this wicked man to all his plots and murders. If he gets too bad, I'll arrest him!"

We started to go, but for a moment Mr. Brandell stopped us and was silent. The enormous and subdued excitement, the exultant fury, which had been apparent in him all the time, now became much more pronounced. The man was thrumming like a dynamo; his strong hands trembled, and when he spoke it was as if he had already become the Duke of Gloucester: there was a quality of powerful cunning and exultant prophecy in his tone, something mad, secret, conspiratorial, and knowing.

"Keep your eyes open to-night," he said. "You may see something worth remembering."

We left him and went out into the theatre.

When we got out into the auditorium the house was almost full, although the people were still going down the aisles to their seats. Because of my father's deafness, Brandell had given us seats in the front row. For a few minutes I watched the people

come in and the house fill up, and I felt again the sense of elation and joy I have always felt in the theatre before the curtain goes up. I looked at the beautiful women, the men in evening clothes, and at all the fat and gaudy ornamentation of the house; I heard the rapid and excited patter of the voices, the stir and rustle of silks, the movement—and I loved it all.

Then in a few minutes the lights darkened. There was a vast, rustling sigh all over the theatre, the sound of a great bending forward, and then, for a moment, in that dim light I saw the thing that has always seemed so full of magic and beauty to me: a thousand people who have suddenly become a single, living creature, and all the frail white spots of faces blooming like petals there in a velvet darkness, upturned, thirsty, silent, and intent and beautiful.

Then the curtain went up, and on an enormous and lofty stage stood the deformed and solitary figure of a man. For a moment I knew the man was Brandell; for a moment I could feel nothing but an astounded surprise, a sense of unreality, to think of the miracle of transformation which had been wrought in the space of a few minutes, to know that this cruel and sinister creature was the man with whom we had just been talking. Then the first words of the great opening speech rang out across the house, and instantly all this was forgotten: the man was no longer Brandell—he was the Duke of Gloucester.

With the opening words, the intelligence was instantly communicated to the audience that it was about to witness such a performance as occurs in the theatre only once in a lifetime. And yet, at first, there was no sense of characterization, no feeling of the cruel and subtle figure of Richard—there was only a mighty music which sounded out across the house, a music so grand and overwhelming that it drowned the memory of all the baseness, the ugliness, and the pettiness in the lives of men. In the sound of the words it seemed there was the full measure of man's grandeur, magnificence, and tragic despair, and the words were flung against immense and timeless skies like a challenge and an evidence of man's dignity, and like a message of faith that he need not be ashamed or afraid of anything.

> "Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
> And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried. . . ."

Then, swiftly and magnificently, with powerful developing strokes of madness, fear, and cruelty, the terrible figure of Richard began to emerge; almost before the conclusion of the opening speech it stood complete. That speech was really a speech of terror, and set clearly the picture of the warped, deformed, agonized Gloucester, for whom there was no beautiful thing in life, a man who had no power to raise himself except by murder. As the play went on, the character of Richard became so real to me, the murders so frightful, the lines filled with such music and such terror, that when the curtain rose on that awful nightmare scene in the tent, I felt I could not stay there if one more drop of blood was shed.

That evening will live in my memory as the most magnificent evening I ever spent in the theatre. On that evening Richard Brandell reached the summit of his career. That night was literally the peak. Immediately after the performance Brandell had a nervous collapse: the play was taken off; he never appeared as Richard again. It was months before he made any appearance whatever, and he never again, during the remainder of his life, approached the performance he gave that night.

GORDON CRAIG'S THEORIES OF ACTING

by

BERNARD BARSHAY

Acting and Drama were and are indivisible. When created as actors create it, Drama may be genuine and perfect. There is then no fitting of an actor into a part, no fitting of a part onto an actor—the play and the playing are one at birth, for one person creates the two and that one is the actor—Gordon Craig.

There has always been a tendency to regard Gordon Craig as a stage designer only. This is a mistake because primary importance must be placed on his extraordinary gift for writing. There, the genius of Ellen Terry's son found its truest expression. His books, his magazine *The Mask*, and articles published in various periodicals have had wide influence over Europe, and the results of his teachings are to be seen either explicitly or implicitly in every theatre in the world. His lyrical style, full of abandon, and aimed to irritate and to awaken, had its desired effect: the world of the theatre did awaken.

Probably the most startling and controversial article he ever wrote was "The Actor and the Über-marionette," first published in 1907. Here Craig challenged the belief that acting is an art:

> Art arrives only by design. Therefore in order to make any work of art it is clear we may only work in those materials with which we can calculate. Man is not one of those materials. . . . Emotion works upon the voice of the actor, and he produces the impression of discordant emotion. It is of no avail to say that emotion is the spirit of the gods, and is precisely what the artist aims to produce; first of all this is not true, and even if it were quite true, every stray emotion, every casual feeling, cannot be of value. Therefore the mind of the actor, we see, is less powerful than his emotion, for emotion is able to win over the mind to assist in the destruction of that which the mind would produce; and as the mind becomes the slave of the emotion it follows that accident upon accident must be continually occurring. So then, we have arrived at this point:

that emotion is the cause which first of all creates, and secondly destroys. Art, as we have said, can admit of no accidents. That, then, which the actor gives us, is not a work of art: it is a series of accidental confessions.[1]

So the actor, he concludes, must be banished from the stage:

Do away with the actor, and you do away with the means by which a debased stage-realism is produced and flourishes. No longer would there be a living figure to confuse us into connecting actuality and art; no longer a living figure in which the weakness and tremors of the flesh were perceptible.

The actor must go and in his place comes the inanimate figure—the Über-marionette—we may call him, until he has won for himself a better name.[2]

These words have been often quoted and generally misunderstood. As Miss Enid Rose observes,[3] they have been wrested from the context in which they were of special significance and used to damage the author's reputation. What Craig meant was that the actor should learn to have complete control of himself on the stage so that emotion could be correctly displayed. The ideal of perfection is represented by the symbol of the marionette. And when it is asked why Craig did not say so in plain English, the answer is that only in the world of imagery do we stimulate the imagination. Evidently, Craig's purpose in advocating a theatre of super marionettes was to attract attention in order to revitalize thinking on the subject of acting. He did not seriously wish to kill the actor. "Our eternal hope for the new stage," he stated in 1925, "lies first with the actor, but not every actor."[4]

Craig's article played an important part in the development of the theatre. "Extreme as this view was," says James Laver, "it was stimulating to workers in the theatre, and it did much to raise the status of the producer. . . ."[5]

Since Craig believes that the theatre is an art form that should express truth as opposed to the fact, he is critical of the naturalistic actor, whose sole aim is "a frank representation of human nature."[6] He denies the actor the right of expressing what the naturalistic painter and writer has won the right to portray.

[1] Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre* (London 1911), pp. 55-58.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[3] Enid Rose, *Gordon Craig and the Theatre* (London n.d.), p. 84.
[4] Craig, *Books and Theatres* (London 1925), p. 71.
[5] James Laver, "Continental Designers in the Theatre," *Design in the Theatre*, ed. Geoffrey Holme (New York and London 1927), p. 24.
[6] Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre*, p. 286.

"What is the difference between the picture and the word. and the living breathing actuality?" he asks.

Why, even the public that sits in the pit of a theatre feels the difference and would refuse to let the actor reveal what it allows Milton and Rabelais to reveal. Then how can there be a shadow of doubt that the actor not only should not be permitted the same liberty as the writer or painter, but actually *is not* permitted that license?[7]

And he can recall no actor

so lacking in intelligence as to desire to present with all its actuality the moment of death as expressed by the modern realist in literature and painting, or the moments of love as expressed by these same frank and most, most blind leaders.[8]

His ideal actor is one "whose brain could conceive and could show us the perfect symbols of all which his nature contains."[9] In Craig's opinion, the man who came closest to this ideal was Henry Irving, with whom he had acted in his youth.[10] To the question whether Irving was natural, Craig replies:

Indeed he was—natural like lightning—but not natural like the ape. Some there are who will for ever think that to be commonplace is to be natural. . . . To these, then, it must appear that if an actor is expressive he is unnatural; if he astonishes, he is positively eccentric; if he is dramatic, a scandal. . . . He was natural in that he did not remind one of either an ape or a god. but of a man. . . . Every moment was formed.[11]

The ideal actor, then, is he who achieves an artistic unity through the skillful control of his instincts:

Instinct and experience have taught him a few things . . . which he continually repeats. For instance, he has learned that the sudden drop in the voice from forte to piano has the power of accentuating and thrilling the audience as much as the crescendo from the piano into the forte. He also knows that laughter is capable of very many sounds. . . . He knows that geniality is a rare thing on the stage and that the bubbling personality is always welcomed. But what he does not know is this, that this same bubbling personality and all this same instinctive knowledge doubles or even trebles its power when guided by scientific knowledge. that is to say, by art.[12]

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 287.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 286.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[10] ". . . it was Irving's influence between 1889 and 1897 that made me realize what path I had to traverse. . . . I cannot exaggerate the value of Irving's influence. Painters. writers. architects—all have helped me; but Irving was a Theatre man. and I think that only a Theatre man can properly help a younger Theatre man." (Craig. *Fourteen Notes* [Seattle 1931], p. 13).
[11] Craig. *Henry Irving* (London [1930]), pp. 80, 81.
[12] Craig. *On the Art of the Theatre*, p. 9.

Craig believes that, since the theatre should express the director's vision of truth, the actor must always be subordinate to the director—indeed, a puppet in his hands. This is consistent with his views on an all-ruling *régisseur*:

> Playgoer: But you are not asking these intelligent actors almost to become puppets?
>
> Stage-Director: A sensitive question! which one would expect from an actor who felt uncertain about his powers. A puppet is at present only a doll, delightful enough for a puppet show. But for a theatre we need more than a doll. Yet that is the feeling which some actors have about their relationship with the stage-manager. They feel they are having their strings pulled, and resent it, and show they feel hurt—insulted!
>
> Playgoer: I can understand that.
>
> Stage-Director: And cannot you understand that they should be willing to be controlled? Consider for a moment the relationship of the men on a ship, and you will understand what I consider to be the relationship of men in a theatre.[13]

But Craig does not want the player to be the puppet of the playwright and is fearful lest the playwright strengthen his hold on the theatre more and more at the expense of the actor. He cites, as an example, Shaw's detailed stage directions for the actors and begs Shaw to leave the actual business of the play to the performers. He believes that the prescriptions of a dramatist will always be inferior to what a creative actor will do, provided he is left free to follow his sense of the theatre. The principles of writing and the laws of the theatre are and always will be contradictory. *"I ask only for the liberation of the actor that he may develop his own powers,"* declares Craig, "and cease from being the marionette of the playwright."[14]

He claimed that the actor of his day was not an artist, for art arrives only by design and the actor depended too much upon inspiration and the imitation of accident to create. As a solution, he proposed, not to remove the actor from the stage, but, instead, to eliminate accident, the enemy of the artist. The ideal actor would be scientific in his approach to character; emotion would always be harnessed to reason. The closer the actor came in expressing emotion to the semblance of the mask, the better would be his performance and the more complete his artistry.

Once the actor has achieved complete control of himself, the

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169.
[14] Craig, *The Theatre-Advancing* (Boston 1928), p. 228.

problem arises of having the director exercise a similar control without forcing the actor to lose his position as a creative artist. Craig gives us the analogy of the modern symphonic orchestra.[15] Just as the orchestra player is subservient to the conductor, so should the actor, whether his part is large or small, be subservient to the director, whose purpose is to present a unified, artistic production wherein the ensemble will predominate and not the individual, wherein the actor will blend with the scene, and wherein one primary mood and atmosphere shall have been established.

The naturalistic actor aimed to portray real life. Craig's actor was to have inspiration or "the fire of gods and demons" but "without the smoke and the steam of mortality," the weaknesses of uncontrolled body and emotions. Through the actor's intelligence, imagination, and self-control, he shows us the perfect symbols of all that his nature contains. Thus acting, like the production, would be "designed," every moment of it being planned, "guided by scientific knowledge."

There is, of course, a tremendous difference between the world of theory and the world of practice. Let us see what happened to Craig's theories of acting when he himself applied them to *Hamlet* and *Rosmersholm,* two of his major productions.

In 1906 Eleanora Duse invited him to Florence to design and produce *Rosmersholm* for her. After weeks of preparation, an immense, expectant public filled the Pergola Theatre in Florence to witness what was to be the only performance of the Ibsen play. Isadora Duncan has left an absorbing description of the opening scene in Rosmer's sitting room, which was dominated by a great square window:

> Never have I seen such a vision of loveliness. Through vast blue spaces, celestial harmonies, mounting lines, colossal heights, one's soul was drawn toward the light of this great window which showed beyond, no little avenue but the infinite universe. Within these blue spaces was all the thought, the meditation, the earthly sorrow of man. Beyond the window was all the ecstasy, the joy, the miracle of his imagination. Was this the living-room of Rosmersholm? I do not know what Ibsen would have thought. Probably he would have been as we were —speechless, carried away.[16]

[15] Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre,* p. 147.
[16] Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York 1927), pp. 202, 203.

Over the acting in this beautiful setting. Miss Duncan was less enthusiastic:

> Duse, with her marvelous instinct, had donned a gown of white with great wide sleeves that fell at her sides. When she appeared, she looked less like Rebecca West than a Delphic Sybil. With her unerring genius, she adapted herself to every great line and to each shaft of light which enveloped her. She changed all her gestures and movements. She moved in the scene like some prophetess announcing great tidings.
>
> But when the other actors came on—Rosmer, for instance, who put his hands in his pockets—they seemed to be like stage hands who had walked on by mistake. It was positively painful.[17]

Duse herself was delighted with the production. She denounced the naturalistic theatre. "Only through Gordon Craig," she exclaimed, "will we poor actors find release from this monstrosity, this charnel house, which is the theatre of to-day!"[18] Nevertheless, it is clear that, except for Duse, the actors were unable to adapt their technique to the stylized effect that Craig wished to give and appeared lost and out of place in the towering, symbolic setting he had provided.

In 1911 Craig went to Russia to stage *Hamlet* at the Moscow Art Theatre. For this production he introduced an innovation—moving screens, to serve as a background for every scene. But his plan of constructing the screens of cork, lumber, and metal proved impractical because of the weight of the materials, and ordinary theatrical canvas was substituted. At the final rehearsal the tall screens began to fall, one by one, breaking frames and tearing canvas. After a frenzy of last minute effort, the performance went on as scheduled, the only change being the use of the curtain throughout the play to cover scene shifts.

Although the production, according to Stanislavski, met with success, neither he nor Craig was pleased with it. As with *Rosmersholm*, the naturalistic acting of the players was incompatible with the simple setting. Not only were Stanislavski's actors dwarfed by the all-engulfing screens, but they seemed incapable of changing their style so as to be lyrical, heroic. They "played against Craig's formal background," reported Komisarjevsky, who was a spectator, "in the same manner as in *Uncle Vania*, only lacking the same conviction."[19] Concerning Craig's theories, he remarks:

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 205.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] Theodore Komisarjevsky, *The Theatre and a Changing Civilisation* (London [1935]), p. 121.

> The experiments of the French symbolists have already shown that a real actor can never be turned into a symbol and cannot be made to fit into an abstract two-dimensional painted scenic environment, and Craig comes to the logical conclusion that an actor cannot satisfactorily represent a symbol and cannot be adjusted even to a three-dimensional symbolic environment. Instead of realising that the theatre of living actors is a different thing from the theatre which deals with subjects detached from life-like reality and which uses mechanically worked shapes and contrivances, Craig blames the actor for the failure of his experiments.[20]

As Komisarjevsky is one of those who took Craig's statements about the marionette literally,[21] his criticism is understandable. But he overlooks the fact that Duse, in representing Rebecca West as the symbol of life, did prove, according to the testimony of Isadora Duncan, that a real actor can be turned into a symbol, fitting into an abstract two- or three-dimensional background.

Craig, both with *Rosmersholm* and *Hamlet,* was working in foreign countries, first with Italian and then with Russian actors. Neither group of actors understood him; nor did he understand them. In the case of Duse, Miss Duncan was the patient translator, striving tirelessly to make Craig and the actress intelligible to each other;[22] and Duse's magnificent performance in *Rosmersholm* showed what could be achieved under suitable conditions.

From these two productions, however, certain conclusions can be drawn concerning Craig's theories of acting. First, the ideal of symbolic acting is much more difficult to attain than the comparatively simple one of symbolic setting. And second, there can be no contradiction of styles; a symbolic setting and naturalistic acting, or a naturalistic setting and symbolic acting, will never harmonize in the same production.

As with all innovators, Gordon Craig has his detractors, who point to what they believe to be inconsistencies in his theories and maintain that they are also impracticable. To evaluate justly the influence these theories exerted on the modern theatre, one must view them in historical perspective.

The prime purpose behind all of Craig's writings and work in the theatre was the destruction of the creed of naturalism as it existed in 1900. As the apostle of theatricalism, "a modern neo-conventional stage form based on the principle that 'theatre

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] Duncan, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-200.

is theatre, not life.' "[23] Craig called for a different approach to dramatic production. Revolting against the falsities and trivialities of the naturalistic method, he determined to drive them from the stage. For those falsities he substituted symbolic form, and in place of the trivialities he made of the theatre a temple. Masses of light and shade replaced detail, statuesque shapes were employed for illusionistic interiors, and different planes of action were provided for the more effective display of the actors. Thus he pioneered for a new theatre, stylistic, suggestive, completely anti-naturalistic.

Once the creed of naturalism, supreme in the theatre at the turn of the century, had been strongly attacked, new theories of play production evolved rapidly. Constructivism, cubism, and other centrifugal movements appeared and found expression in Europe. Theatre directors such as the Russians Meyerhold, Tairov, Granovsky, and Vachtangov succeeded in giving to the actor and the ensemble a distinguished, stylized vitality hitherto not seen on the stage.

These men, borrowing the idea of a supreme *régisseur* from Craig,[24] handled their actors as if they were puppets. Meyerhold, early in his career, dressed them so that they appeared to be painted or moulded on the décor. He made them move and speak like marionettes—as though, to quote him, "their words sounded like drops of water falling into a well."[25] Later, he modified his style of manipulating the actors, but his control over them and every aspect of production remained as great. His *Sister Beatrice* helped to free the actor from the tyranny of lifelike surroundings by giving a streamlined beauty to the background. In other productions, also, the stylized acting he advocated blended well with the scene.

Tairov effected a fluid stage by keeping his actors moving about it continuously—running, walking, jumping, perching. He too made them behave like puppets. Granovsky and Vachtangov developed a similar kind of automatism.

But the most successful of Craig's early disciples was prob-

[23] Mordecai Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old* (New York 1940), p. 494.

[24] Before Craig the Saxe-Meiningen Players under Kronek had, it is true, developed the ensemble type of production, with authority centered in the director. But they had not Craig's conception of the *régisseur*. They thought of him solely as the instrument to create mass effects; Craig, on the other hand, wanted the entire production to be the expression of one man's vision.

[25] Cited by Theodore Komisarjevsky, *Myself and the Theatre* (New York [1930]), p. 79.

ably Max Reinhardt. Coming under Craig's influence at the beginning of his long career as a director, Reinhardt broke with the accepted traditions of the German theatre in his presentation of *The Winter's Tale*—"an absolute Craig-ish show," he described it[26]—at the Neues Theater, Berlin, in 1905. A superb organizer, blessed with the support that has always been denied to Craig, Reinhardt carried out his teacher's theories at the Deutsches Theater and the Circus Schumann in one splendid production after another, until he was recognized as the foremost *régisseur* of his day and the master of mass effects on the stage. An actor before he became a director, Reinhardt was a genius at handling actors, singly as well as in groups. Like Meyerhold he dominated his productions. Great as was Alexander Moissi, his star at the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt was always the better known.

Thus through his followers, Gordon Craig has, in the words of Sheldon Cheney, "influenced the world theatre more than any other artist in modern times."[27]

[26] Craig, *Fourteen Notes*, p. 17.
[27] Sheldon Cheney, *The Theatre* (New York 1929), p. 518.

THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE, FRANCE'S FIRST POPULAR PLAYHOUSE

by

CHARLES NIEMEYER

At the opening of the sixteenth century the French drama, still in the hands of amateurs, remained, as yet, almost completely "homeless." Religious plays were performed in a field at Amiens and at street crossings in Saint-Quentin during 1500. At Forcalquier, in 1518, *le jeu de Sainte Suzanne* was produced in a public square; at Rouen, the tennis court of Saint-Antoine served for the *jeux de Sotteville* in 1530; and, in 1531, a Passion Play was performed at Auxerre in a cemetery.[1]

Even at this late date there was no consistent staging technique to aid in developing an ideal or standardized form for improvised playhouses. At Chaumont, in 1500, the various scenes of the play were set on separate scaffolds and the spectators filed by in a procession. At Valenciennes, in 1547, the Passion Play was performed on a long platform erected in the courtyard of the Duke d'Arschot's château; but certain episodes of the drama appear to have been enacted within the château as well.[2]

For some of the gigantic mysteries, temporary wooden platforms, from 100 to 300 feet long by 50 feet wide, were constructed to serve as stages. For others, a great variety of separate scaffolds, built on several levels, were raised. But regardless of the precise arrangement, the actors performed both on the stages (*étages* or *établies*) and in the open space before them (*la terre, le parc.* or *le parquet*).[3]

Ordinary townsmen who watched the spectacles stood about the periphery of the playing area or were provided with seats on several levels of steps, while the more privileged classes looked on from closed loges ranged in tiers. Often, actors and spectators alike were afforded protection against the heat of the sun and

[1] L. Petit de Julleville, *Les Mystères* (Paris 1880), II, 78-84, 107, 117, 158.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 153.
[3] Gustave Cohen, *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du moyen âge* (Paris 1926), pp. xxii, 85-89.

the rain by an immense cloth, suspended by ropes over the improvised theatre. In many instances, the crumbling old Roman amphitheatres served as models for the temporary medieval playhouses, as Cohen has shown. He notes the performance of a religious drama in the arena at Bourges in 1536; and he interprets the Fouquet miniature as a crude imitation of a similar structure.[4]

Paris, however, possessed a theatre, or at least a structure adapted to serve regularly as such, from as early as 1402. On December 4 of that year, a group of tradesmen, who had probably been performing religious plays for several years previously, was formally granted a charter by Charles VI. As an amateur acting society they boasted of an official title: Confrérie de la Passion et Résurrection de notre Sauveur et Rédempteur Jésus-Christ; and they were given the privilege of playing any mysteries they chose, including the *Mystère de la Passion*.[5] Determined to have a permanent home, the Brotherhood leased a large, second story hall at the Hôpital de la Trinité, a building which had earlier been a home of refuge for pilgrims and travelers, but which, on the death of the founders, had been abandoned.

This hall was 126 feet deep by 36 feet wide,[6] and was apparently adapted to accommodate the outdoor staging techniques of the period. The scaffolds, which served as stages, were often two levels high,[7] and were placed either at one end of the room or along the central axis, and it seems likely that graduated steps and closed loges were arranged about the walls.

Sharing their playhouse with the other amateur societies, The Sots and the Enfants sans Souci, the Confrères continued in this location until 1539, when they were forced to move, due to a project to re-establish the building as a hospital.[8] The Confrérie then transported their theatrical paraphernalia to the ancient Hôtel de Flandres, near the Porte Coquillière; and there they improvised a theatre "with tapestry, seats, and benches to receive all upright and virtuous persons."[9] But after remaining at the Hôtel de Flan-

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 243 ff. This fifteenth-century miniature by Jehan Fouquet has been widely reproduced in standard works on the history of the theatre, under the title: *The Martyrdom of St. Apolline.*

[5] Text of the charter reprinted in François and Claude Parfaict, *Histoire du théâtre français* (Paris 1734-1749), I, 45-49.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[7] Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[8] Parfaict, *op. cit.*, I, 53.

[9] Quoted from a proclamation of 1540, cited *ibid.*, II, 385.

dres only four years, the Society again found themselves without a theatre when, in 1543, François I ordered the sale and destruction of this building.[10]

During the ensuing five-year period the Brotherhood wandered homelessly, performing their mysteries wherever they could find a suitable place. Then, still determined to possess a playhouse in their own right, they drew up a document on July 16, 1548, authorizing their Masters and Governors to purchase from Sire Jehan Rouvert, merchant of Paris, "a piece of land and ruins, one-hundred two feet long by ninety-six feet wide,[11] which seems suitable to build and construct a great hall and other buildings necessary for the said Confrérie."[12] Located in the Saint-Dennis quarter, near the boundaries of the Quartier des Halles, this property had previously been the site of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, mansion of the Dukes of Burgundy, which had also been sold and destroyed by the royal decree of 1543.

On August 20, 1548, the sale was effected,[13] and at once the Brotherhood became occupied with the construction of their theatre and the disposal of their surplus property. The land they had purchased was located on a corner, with 96 feet frontage on the Rue Mauconseil, and 102 feet frontage on the Rue Neuve-Saint-François (later the Rue Française). Reserving for their playhouse a site with 42 feet frontage on the Rue Mauconseil and a depth of 102 feet, plus a small court on the east side (18 feet wide by 48 feet deep) and a passage from this court to the Rue Neuve-Saint-François (12 feet wide), the Confrères sold the remainder in four parcels.[14]

Here, in 1550, the Brotherhood inaugurated their playhouse, a long, narrow, barnlike structure, two stories high, which was named after the old Burgundian château, and which was, in fact, the first permanent, popular theatre to be erected since classical times. Remaining in the possession of the Confrères until 1677, this playhouse continued to offer dramatic fare to the Parisian populace, with only slight interruptions, until 1783—a total lifespan of 233 years.

[10] *Ibid.*, I, 53.

[11] In this entire study "feet" and "inches" are a literal translation of the French *pieds* and *pouces*. This avoids an overburdening of the text with decimal points and dimensions carried out to three decimal places. The exact equivalent of the *pied de roi* is 12.789 inches (see Horace Doursther, *Dictionnaire universel des poids et mesures, anciens et modernes* [Bruxelles 1840], p. 408).

[12] Document reprinted in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, I, 56 ff.

[13] Contract reprinted in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, III, 224 ff.

[14] For a detailed explanation of these sales, see Jean Lemoine, *La première du Cid, le théâtre, les interprètes, d'après des documents inédits* (Paris [1936]), pp. 14 ff.

Knowledge of the original interior of the Hôtel de Bourgogne is sketchy and hypothetical. However, its arrangement in the early years of the seventeenth century can be reconstructed with more confidence from various leases to professional troupes and from iconographic material.

In 1647 the interior was completely remodeled, and, fortunately, the detailed contract of the Confrères with their carpenter and woodworker has been discovered by Jean Lemoine and made available for this first reconstruction.[15] In addition, I have found a ground plan of the theatre, drawn in 1773 and published by Gabriel Dumont.[16] By carefully comparing the latter with the carpenter's contract, and by taking into consideration the refurbishing of the playhouse in 1716 and the additions and slight alterations of 1760 and 1764, I find that it is possible to re-create a clear image of the first Parisian theatre as it existed through its most illustrious years.

That the Brotherhood and their original contractors were pioneering in theatre architecture is fully evident from the poor design and arrangement of the playhouse. Having no intention of relying upon gate receipts alone to support their enterprise, they planned four shops which they hoped to lease, "two opening on the Rue Mauconseil, near the door of the pit, and two others by the great and principal door on the Rue Saint-François."[17] The theatre proper, commonly designated as "the great hall," was located on the second level above the stores of grocers, orange merchants, and horse dealers;[18] and the fact that no suitable interior stairways had been provided to give access to the playhouse was to cause the Brotherhood endless worry for a hundred years.

The façade of the structure on the Rue Mauconseil presented the fronts of two shops on the first level, and the pit door on the second; the latter was reached by an outside stairway leading up to a tiny balcony. Spectators arrived at the loges by a similar stairway and balcony, located in the courtyard on the east side of the building. Early in the seventeenth century these accom-

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

[16] Gabriel P. M. Dumont, *Parallele de plans des plus belles salles de spectacles d'Italie et de France, avec des détails de machines théâtrales* (Paris *circa* 1777), no pagination.

[17] From an item of receipts and expenses of the Confrérie, March 10, 1640; reprinted in Eudore Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière et sur sa famille* (Paris 1863), p. 166.

[18] Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

modations had apparently become dilapidated and unsafe, for a lease of January 18. 1639, to a professional troupe specifies:

> The said lessees may make and construct at their expense a gallery running the length of the shops and ending at the door in the most suitable place for the safe accommodation of the pit door and another little gallery near the large door to the loges, also at their expense. . .[19]

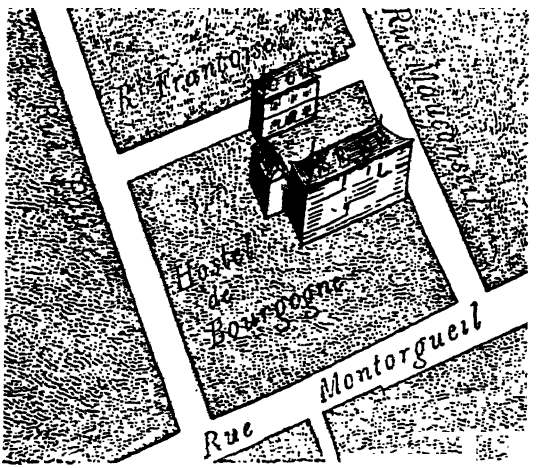


Fig. 1. An Aerial View of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

Still another clumsy feature of the original design is made clear in an aerial view of the Hôtel, seen from the west, which has been based on Gomboust's plan of Paris (Fig. 1).[20] On the Rue Neuve-Saint-François, the Confrères constructed a small two-story shack, terminating the passage from the courtyard. The chamber on the ground floor served for meetings of the Brotherhood;[21] and through this room, actors and buyers of loge seats passed to gain access to the theatre proper. It is this entrance which so frequently figures in various leases as "the great door." Since the designers had failed to provide dressing room facilities near the stage, the second floor of the shack was later specified for

[19] Text of lease reprinted *ibid.*, p. 34.
[20] Reproduced in Pierre Corneille, *Oeuvres*, ed. Marty-Laveaux (Paris 1862), *Album*.
[21] Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

this purpose. Thus, a lease of January 18, 1639, allows to the Comédiens Ordinaires du Roi

> . . . the great hall, loges, stage, and galleries of the said Hôtel de Bourgogne, with the first chamber located above the great door of the said Hôtel for dressing themselves and storing their wardrobe, as well as their passage by the great stairway at the side of the said great door of the said Hôtel, on the Rue Saint-François. . . .[22]

From the ground plan of 1773, I find that the theatre itself was a long rectangle, measuring 94 feet by 40 feet on the interior. But its arrangement at this time scarcely offers a clew to the original location of the stage and seats. Perhaps, the "scaffold" mentioned in an anonymous remonstrance of 1588[23] was a simple platform stage raised on one or more levels at the north end of the hall, where the stage was later constructed. Perhaps, in 1550, the earlier type of staging demanded, instead, a long platform running the length of the hall. Of this there can be no certainty. Nonetheless, it is clear that the theatre was originally equipped with loges, for a document of 1548 specified that Jehan Rouvert, from whom the site was purchased, "will have one of the loges which will be made in the hall of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, for himself, his children, and friends during their lifetime without payment."[24] That these loges were arranged around the walls of the theatre on two or three levels seems likely, inasmuch as such a plan had been followed in the temporary theatre built by the Brotherhood in 1541.[25]

The Confrères had scarcely begun the construction of their new home when they suddenly found the success of their venture threatened. By a declaration of November 17, 1548, the Court of Paris, disgusted with the profane elements which had come to dominate the religious plays, forbade the Brotherhood to act the major works of their repertory: the *Mystère de la Passion* and all other sacred plays. However, in the same edict the Confrérie were granted a full monopoly on theatrical performances in the city and suburbs; and none could be given except with their permission and to their profit.[26]

It is most probable that the Brotherhood continued to play their old sacred pieces disguised as other genres; and, in addition,

[22] Full text reprinted in Soulié, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
[23] See below, p. 70.
[24] Full text reprinted in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, I, 55.
[25] Description of plan printed in Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. xv.
[26] Text of proclamation printed in part in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, II, 2-4.

burlesques, farces, and moralities.[27] In 1577 they were exhibiting to the public "old romances and history plays,"[28] and in 1588 they were soundly castigated for their profanities. An anonymous remonstrance to the King wholeheartedly condemned all stage players

> . . . and especially those who are creating a sewer and house of Satan, named the Hôtel de Bourgogne, by those who abusively call themselves the Confrères de la Passion de J. C. In this place occur a thousand scandalous assignations, to the hindrance of the uprightness and chastity of women and to the ruin of the families of poor artisans. Of these the base hall is full; and for more than two hours before the play they pass their time in lewd activities, in dice games, in gluttony, and drunkenness, so publicly that many quarrels and fights result. On the scaffold they have placed some altars bearing a cross and ecclesiastical ornaments; they have shown priests in surplices, even in lewd farces, to perform mock marriages. They have read the text of the Evangelist in an ecclesiastical chant to come occasionally upon a word which serves as a jest.[29]

In 1596 the Brotherhood made a last frantic effort to return to their old sacred repertory; but although their request was granted by the King, his permission was set aside by the Parliament of Paris in 1598.[30] It is about this time that the Confrères ceased acting themselves and relinquished the drama to the numerous professional companies which had begun to pour into Paris, and which were forced to rent the Hôtel de Bourgogne for their performances. They settled down to reap the windfall of their monopoly. Collecting one écu a day from any troupe not renting their playhouse, they also sought in 1597 to increase the income from the Hôtel de Bourgogne by obtaining permission to open their doors on week days as well as on Sundays and holidays.[31] Thus they found themselves masters of a booming enterprise—the professional theatre. There was only this one permanent, public theatre in the whole of France at the close of the sixteenth century, and all its profits accrued to the Brotherhood.

During the first three decades of the seventeenth century the Hôtel de Bourgogne continued to reign supreme and was occupied by one or more troupes each year. But the Brotherhood found themselves constantly distressed with suits against obstreperous companies who played at the fairs of Saint-Germain and Saint-

[27] M. V. Fournel, *Les Contemporains de Molière* (Paris 1863), I, xix.
[28] Mentioned in a plea to the Parliament of Paris of September 5, 1577, reprinted in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, III, 234.
[29] *Remonstrances très-humbles au Roy de France & de Pologne, Henry III du nom, 1588*, printed in part in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, III, 238, and in part in Eugène Rigal, *Esquisse d'une histoire des théâtres de Paris de 1545 à 1635* (Paris 1887), p. 21.
[30] Parfaict, *op. cit.*, III, 241.
[31] Soulié, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

Laurent and who improvised playhouses at the Hôtel d'Argent, the Sabot d'Or, and in innumerable tennis courts. Nonetheless, the power of their monopoly remained unbroken until 1632, when, at length, the Lieutenant Civil reversed the precedent, doubtless through the intervention of Cardinal Richelieu, and allowed the troupe of Montdory and Le Noir to establish themselves at the tennis court of la Fontaine.[32] Two years later this company, with

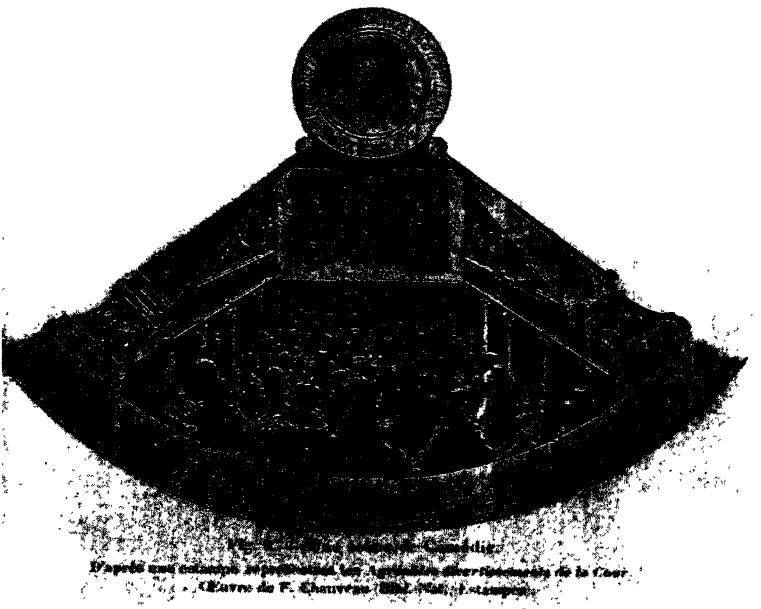


Fig. 2. The Interior of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. About 1645.

the aid of Richelieu, erected the second public playhouse in Paris, the Théâtre du Marais.

An engraving by F. Chauveau (1613-1676) depicts the interior of the Hôtel de Bourgogne as it existed from about 1600 to 1646 (Fig. 2).[33] At the north end of the "great hall," which

[32] Parfaict, *op. cit.*, V, 50.

[33] This illustration, called *La Comédie*, is a segment of a circular engraving, entitled *Les agréables divertissements de la Cour*, preserved in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale. It has been reproduced in Karl Mantzius, *Molière: les théâtres, le public, & les comédiens de son temps*, tr. Maurice Pellisson (Paris 1908), p. 35, but without positive identification or date. Since this view represents none of the court theatres, nor the Théâtre du Marais, it must indicate the Hôtel, where the royal troupe became permanently established in 1635. The Hôtel was remodeled in 1647 (see below, p. 74 ff.), for the company had become highly successful following the entry of Montfleury in 1644. The engraving thus dates between 1644 and 1646. A portrait of Montfleury, also engraved by Chauveau, seems to belong to the same period (reproduced *ibid.*, p. 33).

was 96 feet deep by 40 feet wide, stood the stage, extending the full width of the building. It was 33 feet deep[34] and approximately 6 feet above the flooring, and was apparently raked upward toward the rear for perspective scenery.[35] There was probably a draw curtain, although no proscenium archway. The stage was framed only by the side scenic wings and a valance of canvas or tapestry, hanging above the footlight position. The remaining portion of the hall was given to the auditorium, which appears to have been lighted ordinarily by windows only.[36]

A gallery, divided into loges,[37] extended from the front of the stage, at the same level, along each of the side walls; above was probably a second tier of loges; and on the third level, an open gallery with benches, called the *Paradis*,[38] which was reached by special inside stairways.[39] Before the stage was a pit where the poorer spectators and many of the town rowdies stood throughout the performance. In 1621 a lease to Andreini's Italian company specified that the players would be obliged to allow a widow, named Dellin, to place in the pit

> . . . as many as twelve stools, wherever she wishes, and sell macaroons, bread, wine, and other things there without being hindered in any way by the actors, who may also place benches and stools wherever seems suitable to them.[40]

But the following year all seats were distinctly forbidden in the pit area.[41] At the rear of the auditorium were several graduated levels of steps, called the *amphithéâtre,* which, although first mentioned in a lease of 1626,[42] may have been installed at a far earlier date. In fact, it is highly probable that but few

[34] See below, pp. 74-75.

[35] Fransen has raised a question concerning the structure of the stage in the early quarter of the century. He cites leases which speak of "stages" rather than of a "stage." One of 1616 specifies: "Moreover, the said lessees have no right to anything below the stairway of the little stage in the said great hall." He wisely interprets this in the light of similar phrases found by Liebrecht in contracts at Brussels. Here the little stages, elevated at the rear of the main stage, provided for the appearances of deities in the heavens. See Jan Fransen, "Documents inédits de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France,* XXXIV, 341, and Henri Liebrecht, *Histoire du théâtre français à Bruxelles au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle* (Paris 1923), p. 38.

[36] A lease of 1609 specifies that the porter must be paid to light the grease cups (*graisses*) over the stairways on days when it may be necessary (Fransen, *op. cit.*, p. 332).

[37] The number of loges is uncertain. In a lease of 1608 the Confrères reserved six loges gratis for their Masters; in 1612 and 1613, five loges (see Fransen, *op. cit.*, pp. 324, 326, 338).

[38] A lease of 1606 mentions: "the gallery above called the *Paradis*" (*ibid.*, p. 329). The name doubtless derived from the fact that the upper gallery was on a level with the elevated heaven mansion or Paradise during the era of religious drama.

[39] A lease of 1618 requires the actors to pay 25 sols for each performance to the porter, who "will have to provide and place some grease cups (*gressets*) on the stairways leading to the galleries on each side" (*ibid.*, p. 342).

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 343.

[42] Dated December 27. A clause states that the widow Dellin must be allowed to use "two little closets located under the *amphithéâtre*" (*ibid.*, p. 348).

alterations had been made in the playhouse since its original construction.

A dialogue between characters in Charles Sorel's *La Maison des Jeux* (1642) gives a vivid impression of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, frankly criticizing its poor design and the rowdiness of its patrons:

> The galleries where one sits to see our Comédiens Ordinaires displease me, because one can only see the actors from the side. The pit is very unpleasant; for the crowd there consists of a thousand scoundrels mixed in with respectable people, whom they sometimes insult to produce quarrels over nothing at all, drawing their swords and completely interrupting the play. In their most complete repose they never cease talking, hissing, and shouting. . . .[43]

This was substantially the Hôtel de Bourgogne as it was leased to a number of traveling companies, both French and Italian, in the early decades of the century.[44]

In 1629 the actors began a campaign to overthrow the Brotherhood. They rebelled against the domination of the Confrérie, and the heavy rents charged them. They wished to remodel the badly planned and antiquated old theatre, and at one time they even threatened to level the structure to the ground and "to rebuild it with a dome, in the manner of Italian buildings."[45] But the Brotherhood sternly opposed any alterations whatever. In a remonstrance to the King in 1631, the players promised that if he would give them title to the theatre they would "rebuild in the Italian manner, with more elegance and convenience, taking all necessary measures so that hereafter respectable people, especially the ladies, could attend there without fear of being in too disreputable company."[46]

In 1634 the worries of the troupe were multiplied; for Montdory and Le Noir, patronized by Richelieu and abetted by the talents of the young Corneille, constructed a model of new playhouse design, the Théâtre du Marais. As competition grew keener, the royal troupe never ceased to clamor for a rebuilding.[47] All of Paris, save the Confrères, seemed to realize that a new theatrical era had dawned. Richelieu had himself built an elaborate court playhouse in his palace, where, in 1641, he unveiled scenic won-

[43] Cited in Parfaict, *op. cit.*, VI, 128f.
[44] For a list of these troupes, see Fransen, *op. cit.*, p. 354.
[45] Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[46] Fournel, *op. cit.*, I, xxiv.
[47] In 1638 the Brotherhood frantically begged the King to prevent his troupe from remodeling the Hôtel (Lemoine, *loc. cit.*).

ders previously unknown to the populace. And scarcely four years later, everyone was flocking to the Petit-Bourbon to see Italian operas, produced with settings and machines by the "Great Sorcerer" from Venice, Giacomo Torelli.

At last, in 1647, the Confrères were forced to give in, and on April 17 they drew up a contract with a master carpenter, Paul Charpentier, and a master woodworker, Guillaume de Namur, itemizing all details for a reconstruction of their historic "great hall." Strangely enough, there was no mention of an Italian model. But there was no need for this; the Marais Theatre, which was specified instead,[47] had already incorporated the major elements of the latest Italian theatre designs.

Employing the ground plan rendered by Dumont in 1773 as a basis, I have been able to reconstruct the remodeling from the contract; for the original four walls were never altered (Fig. 3). The stage was to be built completely anew

> . . . forty-three feet deep and the full width of the place, raised six feet at the front and at the back in proportion to the front.[48]

Such phrasing would seem to imply a raked stage for perspective scenery. The boards for this construction must be

> . . . made of fir, twelve feet long by one foot wide, by fifteen *lignes* thick, planed on the upper surface, grooved together, and supported by sufficient girders.

For the first time the theatre was to have a permanent proscenium archway in the Italian manner:

> The wall before the stage must be made of masonry the whole width of the place with good pillars, at least twelve inches in thickness, and the columns carried to the necessary height.

Behind this proscenium, provisions were made for a curtain and a front border:

> . . . two tie-beams will be necessary at the front of the stage, about eighteen inches apart, to attach the border and the apparatus for raising the curtain.

[47] ". . . all the works of carpentry, woodwork, masonry, hardware, and others mentioned . . . to be like and conforming to the stage, loges, and galleries which are at the Marais tennis court, where actors play, and following the drawing which has been made of this . . ." (contract printed in Lemoine, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42). The drawing has not been discovered.

[48] All quotations are drawn from the contract. Note that the previous stage had been but 33 feet deep. A *Promesse* of April 8, 1647, which the actors had first drawn up with the Confrères, specified that the stage would be advanced "ten feet further than it is at present" (see *Promesse*, reprinted in Lemoine, *op. cit.*, p. 39).

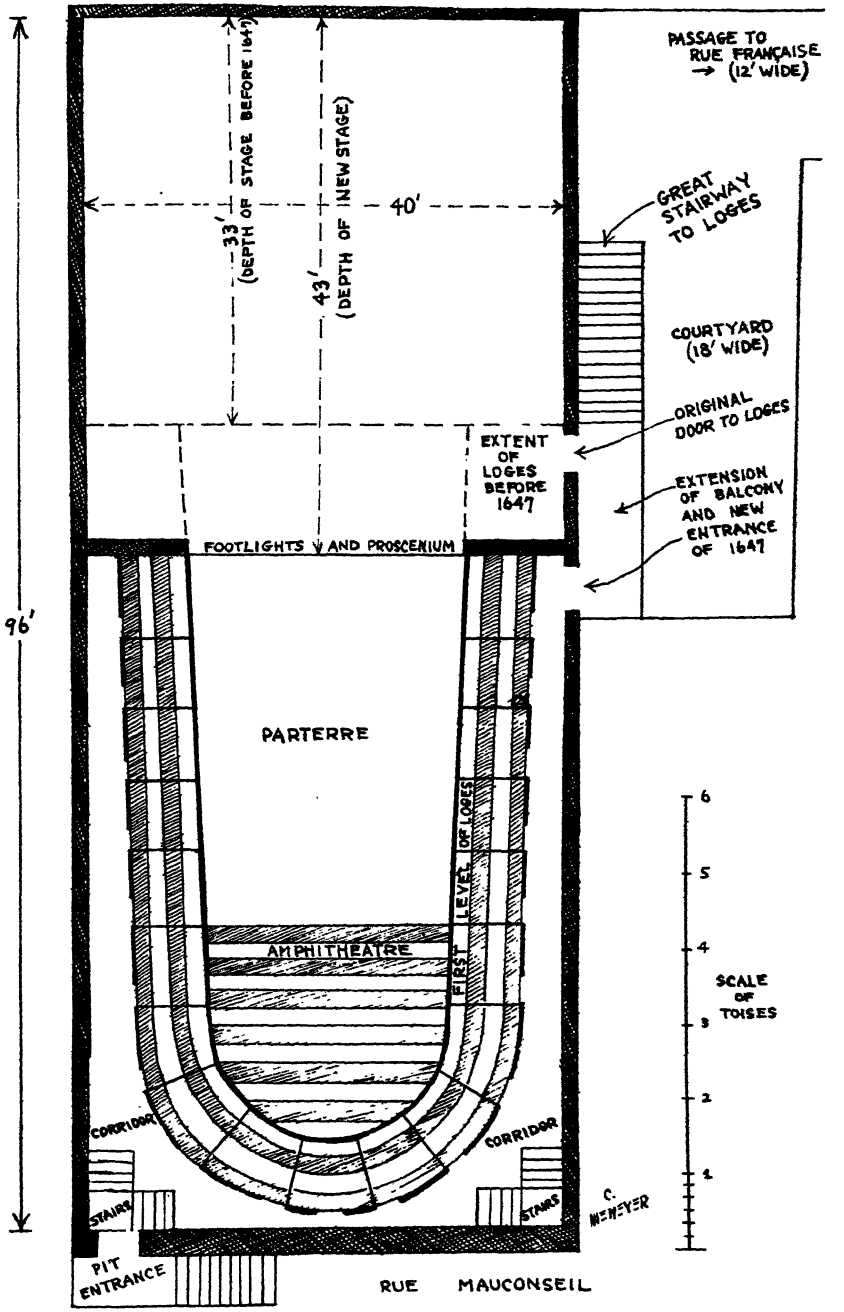


Fig. 3. An Original Ground Plan, Reconstructing the Hôtel de Bourgogne from Dumont and the Remodeling Contract of 1647.

Furthermore, the actors were to be provided with convenient dressing rooms to replace the old second-story chamber, which was nearly 40 feet from the theatre:

Thirteen loges will be built below and above the stage for the actors to dress in, each provided with a door closing with a lock, with seats, boards, and tables. . . . Two stairways will be built to allow the players to mount the stage; and these will continue up towards the roof to a place deemed necessary.

Montdory, at the Marais Theatre, had tried to abolish the old practice of allowing spectators to sit on the stage and had removed the stage loges. The Royal Comédiens followed his example:

The loges which are on the stage at present must be torn down with the exception of the pillars below the tie-beams.[50]

Now that the stage was to extend 10 feet further into the auditorium, the old doorway on the court, through which the loge holders gained entrance, would open upon the stage. To remedy this, the contract specified:

. . . the gallery on the court will be continued to the necessary spot with a covering above; and a new doorway will be pierced in the wall. The one which serves at present will be walled up.

The auditorium was likewise to be completely reconstructed:

. . . it is necessary to take up the flooring of the pit and replace it entirely.[51]

The old loges on the sides and the galleries in the rear must be replaced with

Two levels of loges . . . nineteen in each, six feet wide and of the necessary depth . . . a partition will be made of grooved boards behind the loges with frames at the divisions between the loges and at the doorways; the said doors provided with hardware and locks with keys. The divisions between the loges will be closed at the bottom to the height of the supports and the height of the wooden bars. The necessary seats and steps will be supplied in each loge.

Thus, the loges were to be completely closed on both sides in the Italian fashion.

Above the two levels of loges an open gallery, the *Paradis*, was to be built:

[50] These pillars were doubtlessly to be employed in constructing the proscenium archway.

[51] Blondel notes that in 1752 the pit was 28½ feet deep and was raked a total of 2 feet 9 inches from front to back (Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française* [Paris 1907], II, 30).

Above the second level of loges two partitions are needed with doors in the most suitable place.[32]

And to give access to these various localities, convenient stairways "of woodwork and plaster" were to be supplied. Beneath the first level of loges, in the pit, were to be placed "some seats around the walls . . . supported by frames." At the rear the old levels of steps, comprising the *amphithéâtre,* were to be torn up to make way for the loges, gallery, and corridors, which were to encircle the house.[33]

This now brings us to consider the auditorium shape. We have already noted how poor the sight lines had been from the old loges, which ran straight along the walls from the stage to the rear of the house; and it seems certain that the actors were anxious to remedy this ancient evil. The Italian architects had learned to improve visibility from the closed loges by arranging them in an open U-plan.[34] Dumont's drawing of 1773 indicates this arrangement at the Hôtel and reveals that the rear loges were set in approximately 2 feet nearer the center of the auditorium than those at the proscenium.[35] That this arrangement dated from the seventeenth century is borne out by a sketch, apparently drawn by one of the scene designers of the Hôtel, which clearly depicts the curving of the loges and gallery around the rear of the house.[36]

About November 10, 1647, seven months after the remodeling was begun, the Hôtel de Bourgogne was reopened, to enter upon its most illustrious period.[37] Becoming the house of tragedy and high comedy, the theatre resounded with applause won by such great actors as Bellerose, Montfleury, and Floridor, playing the characters created by Corneille, Racine, and a host of minor dramatists. Despite the fact that they were supreme in their genre, there was serious competition for the King's comedians; for Italian companies still played at the Petit-Bourbon, Cardinal Mazarin was enthusiastically patronizing the Italian operas staged by Torelli, and the Marais actors, having previously fallen in dire straits,

[32] Another passage explains that a stairway "for mounting to the galleries and the *paradis*" was planned at the rear.

[33] It seems apparent that, although the old *amphithéâtre* was torn up, a new section of steps, shallower in depth, was erected behind the standing pit and before the first level of loges at the rear.

[34] See Charles Niemeyer, "The Evolution of Baroque Theatre Design in Italy," *Theatre Annual,* 1942 (New York 1943), p. 38 ff.

[35] This can be determined by continuing the lines of the loge fronts to the rear at the angle indicated.

[36] Reproduced in *Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent, et autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne,* ed. H. C. Lancaster (Paris 1920), p. 106.

[37] The contract specified that the final payment would be made on the completion of the work. This was made November 10, 1647 (see Lemoine, *op. cit.,* p. 43).

were now drawing great crowds with imitations of Torelli's wonders.

In 1658 the long rivalry with Molière's troupe began; and from 1660 to 1672 the royal company was obliged to share their theatre with Spanish actors, brought to Paris by Marie-Thérèse.[58] Moreover, a French opera house had opened in 1671, thus creating a fourth public theatre in the city. The death of Molière in 1673 failed to become the stroke of Providence for them that they might have anticipated; for, although they enticed four of his best actors to their boards, they were offered such vigorous competition by the remnants of his troupe, who allied themselves with the Marais company, that the Hôtel soon became deserted.

In 1677 the actors were at last freed from the domination of the Confrères; the Hôtel de Bourgogne was confiscated and given to the Hôpital Général, which became the new proprietor.[59] However, on August 25, 1680, Louis XIV ordered the royal troupe to abandon their home and join themselves with the united companies of Molière and the Marais Theatre at the Théâtre Guénégaud.[60]

The Hôtel de Bourgogne was then granted to an Italian troupe which had been playing at the Guénégaud Theatre; and here these actors remained until they were banished from Paris on May 14, 1697.[61] A contemporary drawing of 1688 pictures the stage of the Hôtel on the famous occasion when Angelo Constantini was given the mask and bat of Arlecchino.[62] From 1697 until 1716, when the Italians were restored to Paris by the Duke d'Orléans, the old playhouse remained dark and was only employed for lottery drawings.[63] But on June 1, 1716, it was reopened, to present a brilliantly redecorated interior. A description, written by a M. de Charny, pictures the theatre upon this event:

> There was a great crowd at that first performance; but it seemed to me that three-quarters of them had come to see the hall rather than the play; and they had more reason to be satisfied than those who only

[58] Fournel, *op. cit.*, I, xxvii.
[59] Rigal, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
[60] Fournel, *loc. cit.*
[61] See T.-S. Gueullette, *Notes et souvenirs sur le théâtre—italien au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. J.-E. Gueullette (Paris 1938), p. 24.
[62] Allardyce Nicoll, *Masks Mimes and Miracles* (New York 1931), p. 286.
[63] Gueullette, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

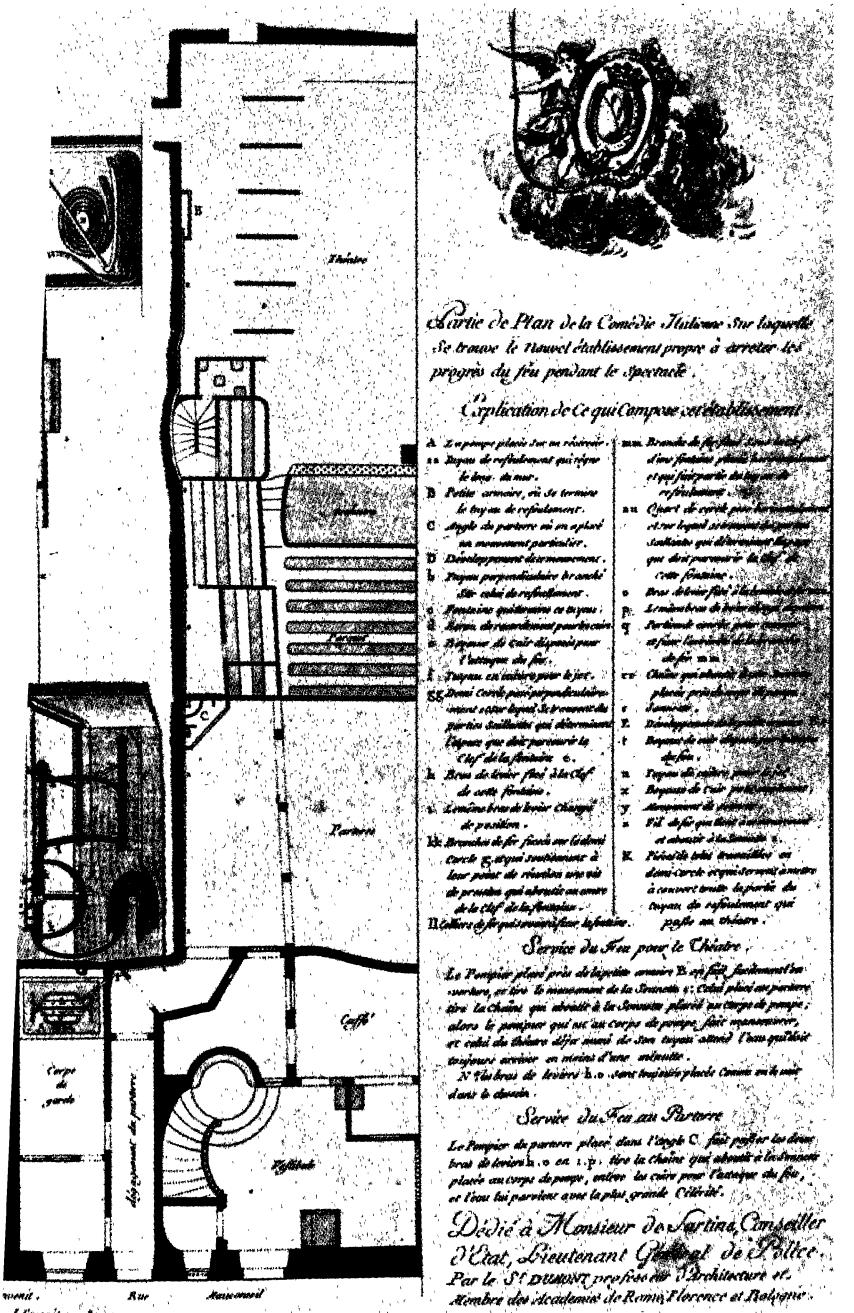


Fig. 4. Dumont's Ground Plan of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1773, Showing a Projected Pumping System for the Allaying of Fires.

came to see the play. The Italian troupe had spared nothing to make the hall magnificent, without however changing its original construction.[64]

During the eighteenth century the aged theatre was several times refurbished and slightly remodeled. In 1744 it was repainted and equipped with a ventilating system for the hot summer months.[65] In 1760 and 1764 the architect, Girault, supervised minor changes; in so doing he

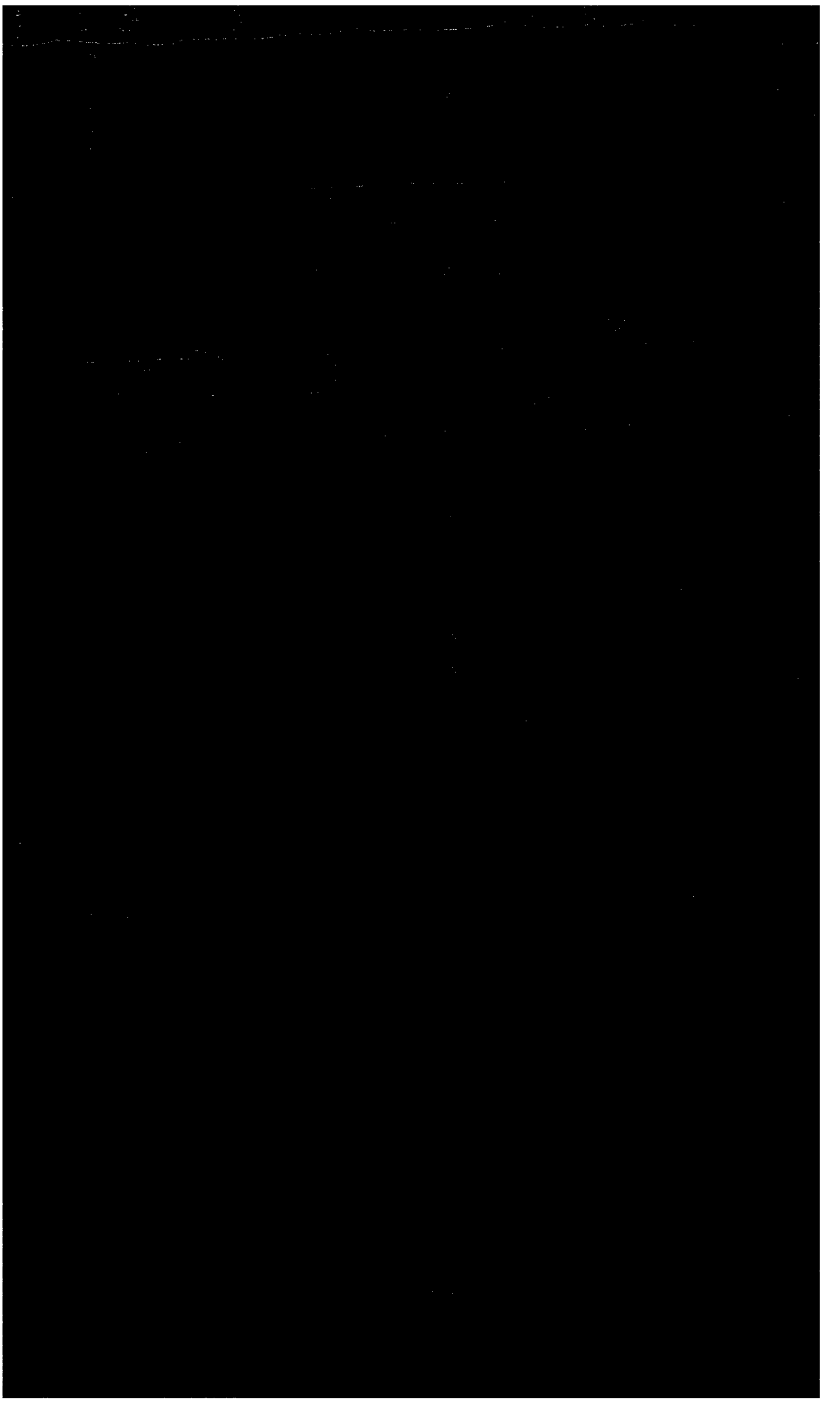
> . . . preserved all the flooring and supports, which he could not destroy without a total reconstruction of the original building. He did not change the old arrangement in any way, but so managed the decoration that it seemed from the great number of conveniences which appeared that the hall had been built anew.[66]

The stage was reduced to a depth of 21 feet; and in the suppressed area an orchestra pit and parquet with benches were built. The old, square proscenium opening was removed and replaced with a rounded archway and three proscenium loges on either side. The old loges and gallery were redecorated, and new stairways were provided to give better access to them. Below the *amphithéâtre* a refreshment shop was installed; and near the pit entrance appeared a vestibule and accommodations for police officers. The whole interior was repainted by a M. Canot.[67]

The theatre had long been so dangerous a firetrap that in 1773 a certain M. Morat designed a pumping system, equipped with the necessary pipes and hose, which he deemed effective in extinguishing a fire. Dumont, a student of theatre design, was pleased at this effort to insure the safety of the spectators, and, believing that it would serve as a good example for other playhouses, he drew up a plan of the proposed installation and included it among his plates on theatre architecture (Fig. 4).[68] This fortunate circumstance has preserved for us perhaps the only scale drawing now extant of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

The historic structure continued to house the Italian actors until 1783, when they moved to the Salle Favart;[69] and in the same year the old building was torn down to make way for a hide and pelt market.[70] Thus ended the glorious career of the first Parisian theatre.

[64] Cited *ibid.*, p. 73.
[65] ". . . by piercing a part of the ceiling which covered the pit and installing two frames which raised and lowered, they gave air to the spectators; an ingenious method which should be followed in all public theatres, where the very limited space makes these places unbearable in the summer" (Blondel. *op. cit.*, II, 35).
[66] A full description of the remodeling is given by Jean Desboulmiers, *Histoire anecdotique et raisonnée du théâtre italien* (Paris 1769), VI, 390 f.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] Dumont, *op. cit.*
[69] Gueullette, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[70] Fournel, *op. cit.*, I, xxviii.





WALTER HAMPDEN AS HAMLET

From a photograph by J. W. Gillies in the Hampden Collection at Harvard.

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WALTER HAMPDEN ON THE STAGE AS SEEN BY H. T. PARKER

Foreword

Since the early days of Eugene O'Neill our theatre has been distinguished by an increasing number of plays devoted to a clinical exploration of social and psychological problems and calling for taut acting of the naturalistic school. What is missing is the romantic tradition that flourished at the beginning of the century. We have become self-conscious about acting in the heroic vein, and with our ears and eyes attuned to radio and television we tend more and more to question the reputations of the outstanding actors of the past who made successful careers out of playing Shakespeare and those other dramatists whose characters are larger than life and require acting on a similar scale.

Shakespeare's plays, kept alive in this country largely by college and semi-professional groups, are relative rarities on Broadway: if we have one a year it is considered remarkable. Even so able an actor as Maurice Evans, who made history with his Richard II, Henry IV, Macbeth, *and the memorable full-length* Hamlet *of a dozen years ago, is afraid of being labelled a "Shakespearean actor," trims down* Hamlet *almost to the level of closet melodrama, and then turns to Shaw. Oddly enough, it is the screen that has brought Shakespeare into greatest favor. Sir Laurence Olivier's magnificent film versions of* Henry V *and* Hamlet *have reaffirmed the Shakespeare lover's confidence in the basic appeal of these plays and have won acclaim for the spacious style of acting that best serves them.*

Traditionally, our leading Shakespearean interpreters have come to us from England, where Shakespeare's plays are given often enough to have a familiar and not alarming aspect, and where actors have the opportunity to appear in classic parts with sufficient frequency to accustom them to the speaking of blank verse and the wearing of costumes. In recent years the performances of Olivier, Evans, John Gielgud, and Ralph Richardson have

demonstrated the value of this training. Yet occasionally America still produces an actor with the talent, temperament, and training to cope with heroic roles.

Shortly you will read the appraisal of such an actor, Walter Hampden, by one of our finest critics of the theatre, the late Henry Taylor Parker, better known as "H.T.P.," of the now departed Boston Evening Transcript. *Most of his long life on the stage Hampden has given to acting and producing the great romantic plays; and from the early 'twenties until his death in* 1934, *Parker wrote voluminously and understandingly of Hampden's playing.*

For Parker, from whom as a young and unlearned critic I received needed encouragement, was a critic in the romantic tradition. A small, intense, rather awesome individual, he lived for the theatre and music. Working on a newspaper that gave him unlimited time and space to express his opinions and impressions—and his writing was intensely impressionistic—he thought nothing of giving two columns to a performance he had enjoyed.*

Parker was not always clear, his large vocabulary and redundant technique leading him at times to hide his exact meaning in a maze of phrases and clauses. What emerged, however, even from his most involved articles, was a tremendous faith in the potentialities of man's imagination and aspiration, especially as embodied in the plays of Shakespeare. Because Hampden in his acting consistently affirmed this same faith, Parker wrote of Hampden's Hamlet, Macbeth, and Cyrano de Bergerac in glowing terms. Hampden has had many admirers within the critics' circle, but I doubt that he has ever received greater understanding and appreciation of his work than he received from Parker. Theirs was a meeting of two men who cherished the same ideals.

Being an actor, Hampden has been in the public eye far more than Parker, and in his seventieth year he is still active in proving his adaptability to time and change. At the moment† he is being applauded for his performance of the professor in Herman Wouk's The Traitor, *a play dealing with so savagely topical a theme as the uses of the atomic bomb. At the same time he is preparing a television production of* Macbeth *for The Players,*

* Miss Elinor Hughes, the author of this foreword, is drama critic for the Boston *Herald*.—Editor.

† That is, April 1949.—Editor

that celebrated theatre club, of which he has been president for twenty years.

He has been on the stage almost half a century. Born Walter Hampden Dougherty, he went to England in 1901 *to learn about Shakespeare by performing in his plays, first with the E. F. Benson Company and later with H. B. Irving. In* 1904, *when he was only twenty-five, a lucky accident gave him the chance to act Hamlet in London; but it was many years before he played the role in his own country.*

In 1918 *the establishment of Shakespeare repertory by Frank McEntree at the Cort Theatre in New York permitted him and other romantically minded actors to appear in a series of matinees of* Hamlet, Julius Caesar, *and* Macbeth. *Encouraged by the attention he attracted in these productions, Hampden decided that, at whatever the cost, his future lay with Shakespeare. He began presenting special Shakespeare matinees while still performing in other plays. Unable to get support from commercial theatre managers, he assembled his own company the following season and took it on tour. Acting as his own producer and director, he soon found that there was an audience for Shakespeare, and added to his repertoire until it embraced not only* Hamlet *and* Macbeth *but also* Othello, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, *and* The Taming of the Shrew.

My own favorite among these was always Hamlet, *not just because it was the first professional Shakespearean performance I ever saw, but because I felt that in appearance, voice, and temperament Hampden was most at home in the role. It was a part, moreover, that changed and deepened as he returned to it with fresh perception, a part that increased in spiritual fervor and emotional color with the years. The final word on* Hamlet *will never be uttered, but I have never sat before any other production that so revealed to me the meaning and grandeur of the play.*

It was, however, with the revival of Edmond Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac *at the National Theatre in New York in November* 1923 *that Hampden achieved his greatest critical and popular success.* Cyrano, *designed to exploit the virtuosity of the great French comedian, Constant Coquelin, is a formidable undertaking, longer than* Hamlet *and possibly more exacting. It is a grand opera without music, an incomparable combination of*

high romance, low comedy, heroic action, literary eloquence, keen irony, and unabashed sentiment. Only an actor of exceptional equipment, able and unafraid to let himself go, can do justice to the title role.

For this great part, Hampden was admirably suited. His voice, rich, flexible, capable of great range of emotional coloring, was perfectly adapted to Brian Hooker's beautiful blank verse translation. He had the stature and vigor for the swordplay and the battle scenes, the humor for the ironic contrasts of the balcony scene, the tragedian's understanding of the final death scene. The memory of his performance dominates my many readings of the play, and his voice echoes through my mind, drowning out the voice of so able an actor as José Ferrer, who recently won approval in the part. A great actor usually has one role that he makes his own: Hampden's monument is Cyrano.

I do not want to give the impression that Hampden's career contained nothing of importance outside of his performances of Shakespeare and Cyrano de Bergerac. These were the foundations of his reputation, but he was to add to it by a most comic and understanding performance of the overzealous Dr. Stockmann in his excellent revival of Ibsen's An Enemy of the People *and by a moving portrayal of the title part in* Caponsacchi, *an ingenious dramatization of the main plot of Browning's* The Ring and the Book.

These plays and many others Hampden presented in Boston, and those that he saw delighted Parker. Naturally, he picked some flaws in their interpretation, but his censure was vastly outweighed by his praise. He lauded Hampden as actor, producer, and director, commended him for his taste and his courage in maintaining his standards, and berated those who thought otherwise.

Although Parker is, unfortunately, no longer with us, Hampden increases in honor as the years pass. Many playgoers still youthful will remember him at his own theatre in New York, where he co-starred with Ethel Barrymore in Hamlet *and* The Merchant of Venice, *where he presented* Henry V *long before Olivier thought of filming it, where he revived* Richard III *and stoutly tried to re-establish repertory in New York.*

Audiences everywhere esteem his name. In lean years and in fat, he has toured America, taking his fortune as he found it,

never forgetting that the theatre should not limit itself to one city but should be part of the life of a nation. During much of his career he was his own manager, but lately he has been content to let others handle that heavy responsibility and concentrate on acting. A believer in the excellence of repertory for the training of young actors, he gave unsparingly of his time and talents to the short-lived American Repertory Theatre, and its failure was a great disappointment to him.

Some years ago, in a speech given in New York, he stated his creed: "To me, the romantic drama is the highest kind of drama and is the kind with which I am best satisfied to associate the word art. . . . The hope that the artist has, I should say, is to present us with an idea of order, harmony and arrangement; to open a window for us upon a different world from the everyday one."

For the window that he has opened upon the world of beauty and romance that is ageless, our debt to Walter Hampden is great. Because he realized this debt and attempted to capture in words the elusive qualities of Hampden's acting, H. T. Parker deserves more recognition than he has had. Actor and critic alike are revealed at their best in the pages that follow. Elinor Hughes.

HAMLET (1922)

Walter Hampden in Shakspeare say the announcements according to customary rule of the theatre. Yet Shakspeare with Walter Hampden actually tenants the stage. Many are the credits to be set down to the actor's account—not least of them that he gives the playwright his head. Mr. Hampden uses no attenuated or distorting "acting versions" after the manner of the purblind and self-centred "great ones" of the "palmy days." He does not smother a play in "upholstery" after the manner of Irving or Tree. No more, in setting and acting, does he constrict and stiffen it, after a newer American method of production. He lifts the starting-gate, as it were, and bids Shakspeare run free. Like Eclipse in the race of the saying, the playwright remains first and all others concerned relatively nowhere. Yet in their

place not less is the merit of Mr. Hampden and the deserts of his companions.

So it was last evening when the actor reappeared at the Opera House and "Hamlet" came and went as first play. Of course Mr. Hampden cuts the text; otherwise a "session" in the theatre more than three hours long would continue above four. It is possible to wish that he would excise more of the platitudes of Polonius and the fripperies of Osric. Then we auditors might hear something of the dispatch of Hamlet to England and escape the loose and seemingly arbitrary jointure that pins the scene of Ophelia's madness next after the scene in the Queen's chamber. So much, however, is counsel of perfection. Enough that while Mr. Hampden cuts, he does not piece and transpose. The journey to England aside, he permits us Shakspeare's dramatic narrative virtually complete and in the continuity in which Shakspeare—strange unforeseeing man!—chose to set it. No doubt he had his rights in the Globe Theatre of Elizabeth's London, even insisted upon them. Perforce, he was nonresistant in the Opera House of Curley's Boston; but Mr. Hampden is wisely generous.

So left unmuted, unstifled, unconstricted, what a tale of the theatre, what a play, is this same "Hamlet"! Through three centuries, it has been numbered among Shakspeare's tragedies. The instructive—bless their hearts!—always write of it as such. Yet the mere pleasure-seeker in a non-educational theatre—fortunate man in a happy place!—may respectfully submit that before "Hamlet" was a tragedy, it was a "corking" romantic play. What else could it be with the ghost of a murdered king on view in the first act, charging his son to vengeance; a feint of madness in the second; a play within a play, a near-murder, a most unfilial encounter between mother and son in the third; more madness, vengeance, alarums, excursions in the fourth; a "clinch" in a grave, a duel, poisons, heaped corpses in the fifth? Here is the very stuff of romantic drama; every secondary Elizabethan playwright might have wallowed in it. Hugo, the elder Dumas would not have disdained such a plot and action.

Here also in Shakspeare's verse is the very speech of romantic drama—poetry in full and changing flood, equally plastic for Hamlet's introspections and Hamlet's ebullitions; equally implicit of Polonius's copy-book maxims and Ophelia's lunatic-fancies; as ready to be elegy to Yorick as lash upon an incestuous Queen.

No maid-of-all-work such poetry, but a Muse as many tongued as are the thoughts, the deeds, the dreams of men. Rich in figures and fantasy are these tongues; clowns and philosophers—Shakspeare sometimes joins the two in one—speak them in common ease. This speech sees visions, plumbs minds, searches hearts; yet stands as ready to wing action, to do even the minor offices of the theatre. From Elsinore to Elmira, the tale of "Hamlet" never was by land or sea. No more is the speech of "Hamlet"—even when the grave-diggers palter in prose—the speech of any man or time or place. The fable and the verse are of romance and nothing and nowhere else. Will Shakspeare, the playwright—not the poet, the philosopher or 1001 other things—is its everlasting prophet.

And what, finally and fundamentally, are the characters but romantic personages? A king who murders his brother and takes to wife that brother's widow, whom dread haunts, who dies under just vengeance; a Laertes who departs a gallant and returns an avenger, who joins in an intrigue, fights through it and is slain—like a gentleman; an Horatio for the understanding and the devotion that may bind man deep to man; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Bernardo and Marcellus, pictorial and fervent, one and all; a wistful and wounded, a wasted and frenzied Ophelia; an old dullard of respectability, Messire Polonius; quipping, boozing grave-diggers—what are they separately and collectively but figures to people and animate a far-flung tapestry of the romantic theatre? And Hamlet himself—a prince of the princely; deep in grief, sworn by spectre to vengeance; uncertain of his own will, taking cover in fantastic concealments, alternately plumbing and outpouring his soul; musing or mocking the hour; forthwith plunging through the tumults of the play within the play and the Queen's chamber; philosopher over Yorick, fighter against Laertes; poet singing his own requiem! Had not Shakspeare begotten him for romance, romance would somehow somewhere have brought him otherwise to birth.

The more then does Mr. Hampden do well when he calls "Hamlet" to the stage as romantic play and himself acts Hamlet as romantic part. Consider his backgrounds—a stripped battlement under a waste of sky, dark save for a single star and a beam from a barred turret; a bare great hall, lean-pillared, gray and grim, with no more than a jester lounging on the steps or the

fair Ophelia crossing, to brighten it; a chamber stifled in hangings for the wanton mother; a barren by the sea for burial place—Mr. Bragdon's one ill-devised setting. In sum of impression a very land of sombre northern romance. Maeterlinck secretly may have envied it.

Recall the costumes—every one in simple line and sober, single colors, grays, drabs, browns, pale yellows, and so counterparts in this atmosphere, contributors to this illusion. Remember the lights far more imaginatively manipulated yesterday than in Mr. Hampden's earlier performances—the chill twilight of the battlement, the stony glare of "the room of state"; the bleak sea-vista; the gleams that now and again fall like streak of ruddy firelight or pale sunlight upon face or figure, so accented, thus glamored.

Except when a slow-paced Polonius (Mr. Thomas) dribbled, the pace was swift and sure. A rhythm of incisive action and clean-cut speech kept fable and poetry in motion. Contrasts told—the physical tumult without, the spiritual perturbation within. Preparation culminated into ordered but unforced climax. Every part was played intelligently, practicedly—for the play, not for the actor—while once and again so graphic a figure as Mr. Rowan's viking Laertes, Mr. Thomas's super-smoothed and Rembrandt-like Polonius, or Mr. Sauter's Horatio that understood and cared and was still, shot sharp through the blended fabric. In gross and in fine "Hamlet" as romantic drama.

Intrinsically romantic, in aspect and deed, in informing spirit and quickening impression, remains and ripens Mr. Hampden's Prince. Not that he plays a melodramatic Hamlet after the manner of the late Mounet-Sully, the present Monsieur de Max, and one or another Italian, down to the futile fustian of Tree. No more does he act a Hamlet bent upon the exhibition of finely shaded states of soul through as finely spoken verse, between parting veils of courtliness and charm, as some say was Booth's Hamlet, as certainly was Sir J. Forbes-Robertson's. Less still is he Hamlet among the modernists Barrymorean. Grief and mistrust gnaw first at Mr. Hampden's Hamlet; wonder and dread possess it at tidings of the ghost; awe and devotion seize upon it before the spectre. Fantasy touches richly this Hamlet feigning; companionship remembered gilds it toward Rosenkrantz, Guildenstern, the players; young blood as well as contriving mind works

in it when it mocks Polonius. It must outfling long-pent introspection as in "O, what a knave and peasant slave"; then as suddenly turn it back with "To be or not to be." It tears in mounting tempest from the guilty King into the Queen's chamber; it sits elegiac with Yorick's skull; burns with white flame through the final scene; romantic to the last, must draw its own mist about its own death.

At every turn, moreover, Mr. Hampden's Hamlet is a Hamlet of sensibility. The Queen would soothe his grief—and the spectator feels the spiritual shiver. Horatio tells of the ghost and the quiver of Hamlet penetrates the theatre. Often this Hamlet feels the beauty of his own Shakspearean words; while half as often the actor gains that beauty in actual speech. An attitude, an intonation, overflows with tenderness toward Ophelia. Or the perturbation within clutches at Hamlet's throat—even to the blurring of the Shakspearean speech. Or else the impulse from within drives words in torrent—now and then in Mr. Hampden's present diction too foamy for clearness. Ironies flash knife-like; fancy plays with a half-smile wistful. A figure of vengeance shapes out of the darkness behind the praying King; tempest-tossed it surges across the Queen's chamber. Fury drives it against Laertes; yet it fights with princely poise. Spent, yet poetizing, it gives up the ghost. Sensibility ever, life-blood of romance, life-blood no less of Mr. Hampden's—and Shakspeare's—Hamlet.

—Boston *Evening Transcript,* December 26, 1922

MACBETH (1923)

Imagination acts "Macbeth" more swiftly than any stage may speed. Once familiar with the play, it outstrips even Shakspeare, here fleetest of pacemakers. No sooner have the Weird Sisters made prophecy of Macbeth's ascent and his progress begun than imagination springs forward past "bleeding sergeants" and old kings, to Lady Macbeth prescient and resolved, to her thane new keyed, to the murder done and the yeasty tumult through which he thrusts to sovereignty. No sooner is he enthroned and self-tortured than imagination darts again—past more murder, past Banquo spectral, to the royal pair—haggard eyes against haggard eyes—their foulest killing black upon their souls; for their own sleep have they slain. Then, as it were, comes breathing-space.

The play pants through Macbeth's second seeking of the Sisters, the murder of Macduff's sons; the encounters in England; Lady Macbeth washing waterless hands through the sleep that remembers in darkness. Forthwith, for the last time Shakspeare draws the whip and imagination goaded leaps well nigh over Birnam Wood at Dunsinane, Siward's slain soldier-son, even over the dead Queen, to hear Macbeth's sword clang against Macduff's shield, and the conquerors' shout around boy-Malcolm, hailed King of Scotland. It was possible to wish Mr. Hampden a revolving stage last evening at the Opera House, or any and all devices by which a play may race from start to finish. Yet had he used them all, the imaginations that fondle "Macbeth" would have outstripped him.

Similarly with the lurid turbulence of the tragedy. Did flesh-and-blood players compass and sustain it in 1923, ninety-nine out of every hundred of us would ban them as ranters for the old men and exile them to that purgatory of the theatre, "the palmy days." Did scene-designers and light-men rend the skies with such flames of red and banks of black as now and then make hellish sunset over the Western Isles and the adjacent waters; did they send mists writhing across windy, dripping moor; or shadows, curling, crawling, like Medusa's serpents, upon castle-wall and stair, nearly as many of us would chide them back to their place in the scheme of the theatre. Yet are not these the very backgrounds and atmosphere that imagination, remembering Scotland and reading "Macbeth," forthwith conjures? Mr. Hampden came closest to them when in the mist-shrouded wood of gaunt-limbed trees (or rather their semblance in artfully folded and lighted stuffs) the assassins slew Banquo but missed Fleance. Or again when lightning, like a fiend's trident, ripped the sky yellow-red above the Weird Sisters' haunts; while out of some befouled cleft of murky air croaked and shrieked their laughter. . . .

Time and again, "Macbeth" should so fret and boil and rage even upon a twentieth-century stage, since here is piece in which there can be no repression. Mr. Rowan of the company at the Opera House came nearest to this vein when as Macduff, he tossed and thundered. . . . Mr. Hampden ran him close, when Macbeth glared and gibbered before Banquo's ghost; while both joined voices and swords to make the final fight the most "gorgeous" combat—there is no other word—our stage has known

since Kyrle Bellew cleared the staircase in "A Gentleman of France" of a score of my Lord Cardinal's assassins. With swords and shields and daggers, straining throats and eyes and thews, shouts and clangors, up and down the castle-court, in change upon change of fortune, fought Mr. Hampden and Mr. Rowan. Schoolboy imagination, draining a romantic page at midnight (while the hidden candle drips on the bed) could not surpass it. . . .

Then the poetry. Take down Holinshed's Chronicle of the time and read the pages bestowed upon "Macbeth and his ladye, who burned with an unquencheable desire to beare ye name of queene." They used to be preface to drooling notes to the play as school-book. See how Shakspeare has made dramatic bricks from little straw, up-piled them with lightning swiftness, heated them white-hot and red in the kiln of his imagination. Yet there, being at noon of every power and possessed of his "imperial theme," he could not stop. He must make Macbeth his flooding rhapsodist, whether Weird Sisters' presage, air-drawn dagger, this world and the next, sovereign sway, a "cream-faced loon" or a queen dead before her time provoke the rhapsody. Once Shakspeare embarks upon these courses, play may pause and personage be as instrument—until his imagery has come to journey's end. . . .

Yet to write these things—since imagination goes a-galloping when Shakspeare plies the whip and "Macbeth" adds spur—is to disparage neither production nor personation. To seek for the unattainable (as lovers learn) is often pleasure even though the seeker knows it to be such. Like Mr. Hopkins a year ago but unlike the so-called "great ones" of old, Mr. Hampden gives his audience the whole play with Shakspearean continuity—or ellipsis—and, thanks to pace, in little more than three hours' commerce. He shifts from place to place with true illusion of them as halts in the playwright's onrush. The "bleeding sergeant" brings his tidings. Malcolm is hailed Prince of Cumberland as well as King of Scotland. The murder of Banquo is visibly done, though, of course, his ghost invisibly rises. In surprising sequence and speed succeed the final scenes of battle—unusual fortune in the Shakspearean theatre shifted to twentieth-century stage. Best of all, Mr. Hampden restores the scene of melancholy prattle ominous between Lady Macduff and her lad and lets the boy wring the heart when he thrusts his lathe at the murderer sent by power.

As wise is he when he lets Old Siward trumpet over his soldier-son, dead with his wounds in front. So doing, Mr. Hampden loves Shakspeare more than his acting self. Even in the theatre "he that loseth his life shall find it."

Again, so doing, Mr. Hampden both deepens and diversifies atmosphere. Therewith indeed he sometimes succeeds in a fashion commendable to those who believe that all Shakspearean stages are Nazareths unless they are labelled "made in Germany." It is hard to remember when the Weird Sisters have seemed so truly weird in their woodland haunt, their cries and croonings, japings, leapings, laughings; or when the apparitions and "the show of kings" in Banquo's royal line, have come and gone with such spectral illusion. Well-imagined is the murk that overhangs the first scenes of the tragedy, the tranquil light that enfolds Macbeth's castle to Duncan's entering eye and speech; the torches that flicker in every draught that blows across the courtyard; the staircase whence the doomed vanish into "seeling night"; whence comes a Macbeth affrighted, a Lady Macbeth trance-ridden.

A half-barbaric time and folk flash out of the bannered soldiery, their shields fantastically graven. Akin are the costumes, abounding in jerkin and Highland "trews," rude-fashioned, sober-colored, dyed as with nature's juices. Once and again a curtain bloody red descends as symbolic hanging. Yet it were possible to wish for more red upon the dreary woe of Macbeth's court. "Blood will have blood" and red is its color, but only Mr. Jones, setting these scenes for Mr. Hopkins, chanced to remember. Within this reservation Mr. Bragdon and Mr. Hampden have wrought notably well. . . .

With Macbeth as with all his deeper-veined parts, Mr. Hampden assorts, adjusts, achieves in slowly ripening process. (Compare his present enriched, enlaced, plastic-fibred, keen-shaded Hamlet with the Prince of his beginnings.) As the thane now goes, memory dwells more upon moments and episodes than upon the sustained illusion of the whole. As plummet drops so this Macbeth lapses into inward doubts and fears, when king and lords salute Malcolm prince and royal heir. Descending the castle-stair to the morning knocking, this Macbeth sees, as through Duncan murdered, the living Macduff, starts and dreads at flesh and voice quick and speaking. As he and his Queen go

from the ghost-haunted feast, as "We are but young in deed" quivers on his lips, he looks back upon her, of a sudden fainted—and in his eyes is the pity of these two wasted spirits. The desolation of mind and heart within, the nervous irritability without, of Macbeth pent beast-like in the final scenes, Mr. Hampden conjoins with keener insight and more plastic means than have been his wont in such psychological and historic processes. The spectator perceives the sluicing into the barbaric flood at the end. At the other extreme Mr. Hampden also excels himself in the frenzy of agonizing dread with which he fronts and exorcises Banquo's ghost. Here sweeps the power that, though old men believe it not, is yet born and reborn upon the tragic stage. . . .

—Boston *Evening Transcript*, January 5, 1923

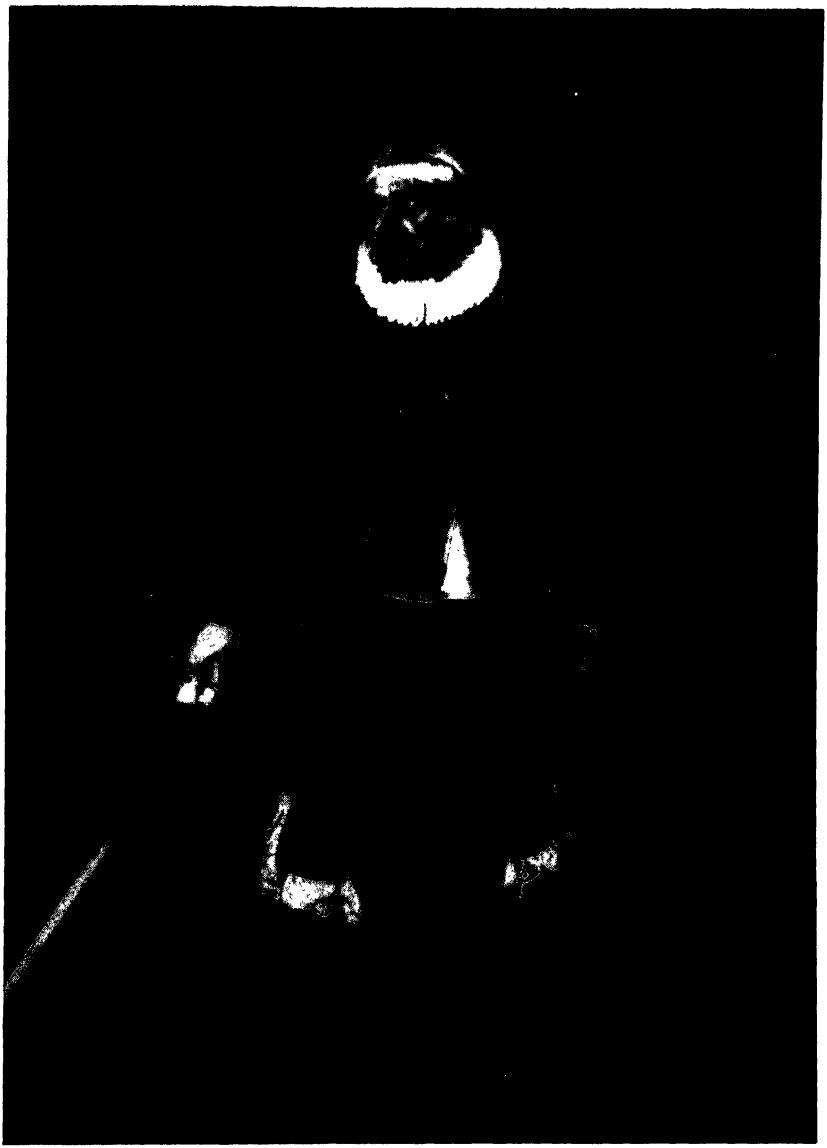
Cyrano De Bergerac (1929)

The magic of the word, of romance, of wit and imagination! Season through, the elder theatre has not so vividly, variously and vigorously re-affirmed itself as at Mr. Hampden's performance of Rostand's "Cyrano" in the Opera House last evening. Once more it was liberation, three hours and a half long, from the daily round, the daily commotions. Again it won the victory of human fingers writing, human voices speaking, human presences doing and enduring, over machinery and mechanism. As of old, and as, likely enough, it ever shall be, one wit, imagination and skill proved more desirable than mass-production for mob-consumption, the world around. The realistic, the journalistic drama, as chronicle of this time, place and living has large and just place in the theatre; but it is neither its be-all nor its end-all. There is room also for the romantic play, and it need not always bear the deadening label of classic. Like "Cyrano," it may have been written less than forty years ago. Our prose of the theatre is keen-edged, significant, stimulating, when a Galsworthy, a Shaw, an O'Neill, or less eminent hands, variously write it. Truthful and pungent it may come off minor pens, choosing out of the daily speech. Yet such virtue and interest are no ground for the exclusion of poetry and verbal artifice. Nor for them, upon the stage, need we be always sent harking back to Shakspeare or to Congreve. In our own time also there have been signal practitioners, say Edmond Rostand.

By all means give us the common humors of the common life fresh-flavored by the theatre. The captious, cynical, baiting wit of many a contemporary comedy is no small pleasure. Yet neither shall deny us the wit that is ever flowering in apt and unexpected turn, likewise full-fashioned. Many of our playwrights run short-breathed in an act half-an-hour long. At the end of three and two hours they are winded. Rostand in "Cyrano" sweeps on through five with tireless wit and inexhaustible invention. As for imagination—time and scene, decorative incidents and accessory figures, are reanimated upon our eyes and ears; a hero is called to life in speech and deed; from theatre and cook-shop to my lady's house and the field of arms we follow him; sit by as he dies in the autumn twilight as becomes an artist and a gentleman. Our constricted theatre is spacious again. There once more imagination draws full breaths. Out into the sting and buffet of the spring winds. They are as nothing beside the exhilaration of "Cyrano de Bergerac," heroic comedy by Edmond Rostand, translated from French into English by Brian Hooker, acted and set on the stage, above six hundred times, by Walter Hampden and his company. Not too numerous was the audience at the Opera House last evening, but the event was memorable.

To the bill of particulars. If the eye is the quickest agent of the audience in the theatre, the ear receives the more persistent impression, knows the more stimulating delights. Out of "Cyrano" they are many. Here is the pleasure of verbal artifice as when Cyrano shapes and rhymes his ballade while he is a-fencing, or celebrates the Cadets of Gascoyne into the cook-shop trooped. There is the pleasure of word and phrase and period when they are speech to ardors, passions, devotions, submissions, the spirit elate, the spirit depressed and declining. As such they sing out of "Cyrano"—most of all in the act by Roxane's house, in the final scene in the convent-garden—out of "Cyrano," moreover, in Mr. Hooker's translation.

Yet again, as in the scenes at the ancient theatre and at the cook-shop, these words of Rostand are the vehicles of the common life, the hour's business, riding indeed in state. For one and all, they are cast into a poetry, outpouring in flood, as various as a running stream, now ripples and wavelets, now full-tide and surge, here surface shimmer, there depths full-plumbed. A poetry, besides, of swift turns, changeful pace, high-mettled in rhythm,



WALTER HAMPDEN AS CYRANO DE BERGERAC

From a photograph by Maurice Goldberg in the Hampden Collection at Harvard.

exuberant in imagery. Names even it can flaunt. Such a poetry to prevail in the theatre must be truly spoken. Likely enough last evening it was pitched too low for the great spaces over which it must carry. Yet Mr. Hampden, for Cyrano, spoke it as richly as it was conceived, as variously as it was shaped, throughout in full mingling of vocal skill and vocal imagination. For the others differing degrees; yet few with inept tongues for that which was set down for them.

And romance? In Act One we of the audience sat by at an interrupted performance in the Hotel de Bourgoyne, Paris of 1640; saw and heard a duel to a ballade; listened to a wondrous speech about a nose; fell, like Cyrano and sundry others, under the spell of the Lady Roxane. Act Two and we were in Ragueneau's pastry-shop—cookery and poets; meters and spits; Roxane at her loving; cadets of Gascoyne at their braving; man-friend to man-friend. Act Four and we are laying siege to Arras, hungrily. Shall not Cyrano, making verses to a dawdling fife, making them out of memories, persuade us one and all, to forget hunger? Shall not Roxane herself descend from her chariot, bursting with food as her heart bursts with love? . . .

In the theatre these things must be acted, and acted last evening they were. True, it was possible to conceive a Christian less passive than Mr. Quigley's; a Roxane of more vivid presence and more ardent spirit than Miss Torrup's. Yet always there was Rostand to quicken and to glamour them. Mr. Hampden, for Cyrano, took the poet-playwright at his instant word. The actor's presence held the eye and filled the imagination. So Cyrano rose masterful upon the actors of the Hotel de Bourgoyne and tossed them his purse. So he dallied with Roxane's duenna and lorded it over the turbulent cadets across the cook-shop. So also he mustered them to battle behind a plume as white as Henri Quatre's before him. In the scene of amorous pleading, and ironic recoil, both amplitudes and subtleties of voice, the outer fire, the inner pangs. In the scene of final illumination and dissolution, gayeties of courage, splendors of will, darts of delirious imagination; through them all undernote of a devotion at last fulfilled.

In this or that part Mr. Hampden may fall short and the

reviewer demur. Here in Cyrano, from outer semblance to inner spirit, from play with artifice to depths and heights of passion, is a personage well-rounded, many shaded, in abundance achieved. More: a whole performance accomplished; for whatever be the individual merit of the players—and in some instances it is considerable—they are acting under Mr. Hampden's prompting. Rarely do the ensemble scenes fail of illusion in mass, in motion, in the quick ebb and flow of detail. Sometimes, as in the act of warfare, they are notably salient, plastic, rich-flavored. Again Mr. Hampden first devising, then directing. . . .

Throughout, moreover, imagination savored with wit. . . . And this wit wears naturally the dress of poetry; into stagecraft takes easy shape. As wit should do, it may even admonish us. "Cyrano" was written in the eighties; long since Rostand is dead and gone. He knew America only as a source of royalties and trickles of fame. Yet here upon Cyrano's lips is the very speech for this our day and our ordering of life. Some will say it defies both. So much the better:

> To sing, to laugh, to dream,
> To walk in my own way and be alone,
> Free, with an eye to see things as they are,
> A voice that means manhood—to cock my hat
> Where I choose—At a word, a Yes, a No.
> To fight—or write. To travel any road
> Under the sun, under the stars, nor doubt
> If fame or fortune lie beyond the bourne—
> Never to make a line I have not heard
> In my own heart; yet, with all modesty
> To say: "My soul, be satisfied with flowers,
> With fruit, with weeds even; but gather them
> In the one garden you may call your own."
> So, when I win some triumph, by some chance.
> Render no share to Caesar—in a word,
> I am too proud to be a parasite.
>
> I stand, not high it may be—but alone.

—Boston *Evening Transcript*, April 30, 1929

The Romantic Actor

To the opera house the American theatre is losing a part of its patrimony. With rare exceptions, only upon the singing stage is it now possible to hear and see romantic drama. At the Metropolitan Opera House, for example, it is large and profitable stock-in-trade.

Once, within memory, all these desirable things were a province of the American theatre. By such scenic fitments as occasion afforded it also recalled departed times, evoked imaginary regions. In verse or in prose the players spoke an intensified ornate speech, pitched their bearing to it; endured, renounced, conquered or died above the common lot; wove spells of fantasy; caught their audiences into illusion and delight. Possibly these were works of the booming, posturing, passion-chawing "balmy days." Saints and sages, recounting them, would have us believe as much. Succeeding generations prefer to exercise a reasonable doubt. Nearer to them lies the proof. Men not yet so decrepit that only "The Front Page" can keep them awake in the theatre, recall the youth and the prime of Julia Marlowe, the heydays of Richard Mansfield, working these illusions, dispensing these pleasures. They were ampler and finer when the playwright also gilded them. They were not wholly lacking when he merely proffered tinsel for the actor to set a-gleaming. Modjeska, the young Skinner, the middle-aged Maurice Barrymore, were no less romantic players, each in degree and kind.

To this day the romantic inclination persists in Mr. Skinner, else he would not now be feigning a lusty Spanish centenarian. The romantic temper in the elder Barrymore passed to John, his son, whose Hamlet and Richard were intrinsically romantic performances; whose production of "The Jest" was romantic drama unalloyed. Nearer still rise Miss Cowl's Juliet, and from her hands Shakspeare's whole tragedy, as the romantic acme of our immediate day; while not to be cast aside were her Cleopatra and Mélisande. Mr. Hampden has acted Rostand's Cyrano upward of 600 times; while, by way of contrast, through so much as a fortnight, Miss Cowl, Mr. Merivale and Sir Guy Standing enticed several thousand Manhattanese to Stephen Phillips's "Paolo and Francesca." Through half that time Mr. Hampden was as fortunate in Boston with Cyrano and his poet. Therewith,

for the purpose of summary, the present score of romantic drama in the American theatre is counted.

If the play chances to be romantic, out of sheer habit this same audience is baffled and bewildered—often enough either to boredom or to consternation. Though the actors excel, what shall it profit them? They are speaking in poetry or in intensified prose. "But people don't talk that way." They make sweeping gestures, are pictorial of pose and motion. "Yes, they are rather comic." Within their characters they encounter romantic fates, do romantic deeds. "What is it all about, anyhow?" The play runs the course of fantasy or exaltation. "Really, we didn't know this was a high-brow show"—the final damning epitaph. Coming from "Cyrano," quickened in mind, touched to the heart, filled with the strangeness and the beauty of romance, many a true believer has run the gauntlet of such comments. Dante's lovers are assumed to be an immortal, a universal pair, but at least half the audiences before Miss Cowl's "Paolo and Francesca" spent the intermissions trying "to place them." Miss Marlowe and a company within the vein used to act "Cymbeline" at high pitch of romantic fantasy. They might as well have acted it in grumbling Choctaw for all that half the audience gathered or guessed.

Our American remedy for most ills is "personality." In the theatre of the spoken word, for romantic drama, it may yet do the office of music as a wakener of imagination; has done as much already. Mansfield prevailed as romantic actor because his personality penetrated and illuded audiences. He conceived every character in terms of himself, traversing the scene, undergoing the adventures, experiencing the emotions, in the play set forth. That self, however, possessed and stimulated the public. In its company and under its spell an audience imagined. . . . There were errors of omission and commission in John Barrymore's Hamlet. Yet in his personality audiences saw, heard and believed in the Prince of Denmark, shared those fates, were not altogether deaf to Shakspeare's verse. Thousands came to enjoy Miss Cowl and found themselves caught into enjoyment of "Romeo and Juliet." Phillips's "Paolo and Francesca" is no masterpiece of romantic tragedy; but three players of contrasting personalities persuaded the public into acts of imaginative faith. By dint of personality Miss Le Gallienne rescued "Peter Pan" from the Adamsian tomb and set Barrie's fantasia into exhilarating play

over many an imagination. Through the mirror of Forbes-Robertson shone twenty romantic parts, and audiences found the glow warming. Rostand's flame, playing out of Cyrano through Mr. Hampden—himself no fiery furnace—has heated six hundred audiences.

Over few fields is blame easier to distribute than over the theatre. There are so many, for instance, to reproach. If the playwrights had written thus and so, if the production managers had done thus and so, if the reviewers and the public had been of another mind, what might not have happened, and all to the good? With romantic drama, with the re-kindling of romantic imagination among audiences, the players are the powers that be. Romantic illusion is a personal emanation, an individual magic. Since this is a land of "personalities," from the players it must first come, though Shakspeare himself is in question. Next it may dart forward upon a quickened audience and back to a vitalized dramatist. Even Rostand needs Mr. Hampden. The theatre hardly offers a finer fortune, an ampler reward. . . .

—New York *Times*, June 16, 1929:
"Romance and the Reluctant Modern Audience"

THE ENGLISH ACTOR'S FIGHT FOR RESPECTABILITY

by

DREW B. PALLETTE

An old playgoer, reading in his newspaper about the social activities of Hollywood's elite, may recall, perhaps ironically, the uncertain position actors held in society less than two generations ago. He may not remember, however, the passionate debate over the morals and dignity of the theatre that took place in the 'eighties and 'nineties. Yet the thespian knights of the turn of the century were created only after a decade of hot contention as to the actor's social status. It is possible that this agitation could have become a matter of such public concern only in England, for several of the events resulting from the argument now seem curious and peculiarly Victorian.

During the 'eighties, the West End stage began to be a refuge for young Oxford graduates with connections, employed to attract more prosperous audiences.[1] This development not only increased salaries for walking gentlemen, but gave a new social interest to the acting profession. However, the controversy over the actor's position in society began as a result of increasing interest in the theatre among the clergy of the Church of England, and it began in Manchester.

The Church had been intermittently sniping at mummers throughout the mid-nineteenth century; but in the 'seventies certain members of the clergy, imbued with reverence for the name of Shakespeare, launched a campaign to make the stage an artistic and moral force in the community. As early as 1874 Bishop Fraser of Manchester had demanded that theatrical productions be improved.[2] On February 1, 1877 he undertook a church mission to the profession and addressed from the stage of two Manchester theatres a large gathering of actors and ballet girls. After remarking that he was probably the first bishop of

[1] "Scrutator," *Truth*, XX (October 21, 1886), 650-652.
[2] J. L. Hammond, *C. P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian* (New York n.d.), p. 54.

the Christian Church to address such a congregation, and asserting that there was a justifiable place in the community for theatres, he called upon the actors to purify the stage by refusing to take immoral parts, and urged the ballet girls to wear longer dresses. Reaction to the Bishop's words were mixed. His remote and condescending tone irritated some of the actors, and his speech was not viewed favorably by many churchgoers.[3] As one theatrical enthusiast announced a few years later,

> Now the storm of contention raged furiously, and the curtain was raised upon a scene of strife in which the church, the press, the people, and, in fact, every representative institution, save the State, mingled and fought with unabated zeal.[4]

While this statement should be taken with considerable reservation, the Bishop had stirred up a bitter discussion.

Ten months after his speech, a group of men met in Manchester to form the Dramatic Reform Association. Issuing a circular, they obtained as their vice-presidents, in addition to Bishop Fraser, a number of individuals prominent in clerical, literary, and theatrical circles. Among these were the Bishops Durham and Melbourne, the Duke of Meiningen, Ruskin, Rossetti, The Reverend the Earl of Mulgrave, the Earl of Onslow, the Kendals, Rose Leclerq, and Ford Madox Brown.[5] The Association endeavored to promote the academy to train actors which was so frequently called for during these years, and urged an endowed theatre. But judging from the journal that it issued periodically, it was primarily interested in purifying the stage. In this pursuit it scrutinized play reviews and reported at least two productions to the Censor.[6]

Through the influence of the Earl of Mulgrave, it did induce the Church Congress, meeting at Sheffield in 1878, to discuss the theatre in its symposium on "The Attitude of the Church in regard to Popular Recreations." On this occasion Bishop Fraser came to the defense of the stage, claiming it to be a potentially

[3] The *Era*, XXXIX (February 11, 1877), 7, 13. This trade journal had praised Bishop Fraser just four days before his Manchester address. For further reaction to the speech see A Manchester Layman, *The Theatre: Its Character and Tendency; Being a Lecture Delivered in the Free Library, Regent Road Salford . . . in Reference to the Recent Utterances of the Bishop of Manchester on Theatrical Performances* (Manchester 1877).

[4] Leopold Wagner, *The Stage with the Curtain Raised* (London 1881), p. 24.

[5] *Dramatic Reform Association: Prospectus*, an undated publication on file in the Harvard Theatre Collection; and *First Report of Committee; with Proceedings at the General Meeting* (Manchester 1879).

[6] *Journal of Dramatic Reform Association*, Nos. 14-17 (February-November 1879), No. 19 (May 1880), Nos. 27-29 (May-November 1882), on file in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

useful adjunct to the community. Nevertheless, the Congress almost unanimously condemned it.[7]

Bishop Fraser continued to say a good word for the actor. In fact, shortly thereafter he discussed critically from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey on a Sunday evening, the playing of a French troupe at the Gaiety Theatre.[8] Yet another and far more militant movement was getting under way in London. This time the activity was among the younger clergy, chiefly of the Established Church, some of whom had become fascinated by the stage. During the 'eighties a number of them began to contribute to dramatic journals, to write plays, or to promote theatricals. At times there would even appear in the papers such a cryptic notice as this: "The Rev. E. Brice, B.A., of Bradford, announces that he has left the Church for the Stage."[9]

But in the late 'seventies, the more progressive clergy were as yet mainly trying to justify the stage as a legitimate part of civic life—as The Reverend Ham, an earnest enthusiast, maintained in a series of Sunday evening sermons from his pulpit.[10] Also, in the same year that Bishop Fraser addressed the actors in Manchester, that recalcitrant young Christian Socialist, Stewart Duckworth Headlam, staged his revolt against his bishop, in defense of ballet girls.

Headlam had come up from Cambridge about seven years before and been assigned curate to the little parish of St. John's, Drury Lane. In this district were a number of hungry actors, theatrical hangers-on, and ballet girls, and the inexperienced young curate soon became engrossed in their problems. Eventually, he became so disturbed when non-theatrical members of his congregation showed animosity toward the ballet girls that he undertook a study of the technique of the dance.[11]

Ordained in 1872, Headlam went on in the next year to the larger curacy at St. Matthew's, Bethnal Green, a workingman's community. There he was soon busy in the cause of trade unionism and with the problems of the laboring classes. He tried to organize meetings between the clergy and union leaders,

[7] For a summary of the speeches, see the *Era* XL (October 21, 1877), 12. For one of the anti-theatre speeches and a commentary on the Congress, see the Rev. Charles Bullock, *Popular Recreation* (*A Church Congress Paper*): *The Theatre As It Is* (London: 'Hand and Heart,' [1880]).

[8] Bullock, *op. cit.*, pp. 51 ff.

[9] *European Mail*, LXVI (November 2, 1883), 28.

[10] The Rev. J. P. Ham, *The Pulpit and the Stage*: *Four Lectures* (London 1878).

[11] F. G. Bettany, *Stewart Headlam*: *A Biography* (London 1926), pp. 26-28.

became acquainted with non-churchgoing workmen, founded the socially minded Guild of St. Matthew's, and joined the local radical group, the Commonwealth Club. To this organization he began bringing younger clergymen to speak, not only on social problems, but also on literature and the drama. On October 7, 1877 he himself gave a lecture on theatres and music halls, in which he urged attendance at such places and upheld the beauty of the ballet and the purity of the dancers.[12] In his audience was an actor who had felt the sting of public prejudice. He asked Headlam to give him a copy of the lecture for publication. Unfortunately, the young curate complied, and it was printed in the *Era*.[13] Someone saw it and sent it to the Bishop of London, and trouble started. Bishop Jackson wrote to Headlam:

> Not for the first time it has caused me to ask pardon of our great Master if I erred, as I fear I did, in admitting you to the Ministry. . . . I do pray earnestly that you may not have to meet before the Judgment seat those whom your encouragement first led to places where they lost the blush of shame and took the first downward step towards vice and misery.[14]

Headlam replied rebelliously, and made plans—later realized—to publish his lecture in pamphlet form, along with the Bishop's letter and his own reply.[15] It is not surprising that on January 4, 1878, he was asked to vacate his post. He moved to St. Thomas's, Charterhouse, and the Guild of St. Matthew's expanded its activities.

The letters of approval that Headlam received from liberal colleagues and his indignation at the persecution of the entertainers in his former flock continued to work on his mind. On May 30, 1879, he founded another organization, the Church and Stage Guild, to bring together actors and clergymen.[16] The Guild never attained any great size, although in its first year it grew to 470 members, of whom 172 were theatrical persons and 91 clergymen. They gave dances and met for discussion in halls, in the foyer of Drury Lane, and, when poverty came, in private homes. Although the provisional committee included Mrs. Ken-

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-45. The address was later published as *Theatres and Music Halls: A Lecture Given at the Commonwealth Club, Bethnal Green, on Sunday, October 7, 1877 . . . with a Letter to the Bishop of London and Other Correspondence* (London 1877). For Headlam's version of the affair, see the preface to his address, *The Function of the Stage* (London 1889).

[13] *Era*, XL (November 18, 1877), 12.

[14] Headlam, *Theatres and Music Halls: A Lecture, etc.* p. v.

[15] Bettany, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-121.

dal, Herman Merivale, Genevieve Ward, and Charles Warner, prominent actors seem to have taken little interest in the movement, and the group was made up largely of minor members of the profession. It was natural that the young Shaw should address it three times and that Ruskin should write Headlam praising its purpose.[17] The Bishop of Manchester remarked, however, that "the whole idea seems too fantastic," and the Church and Stage Guild soon became a butt for intermittent ridicule from the press.[18] *Truth* even called upon the stage members of the Guild to keep in line the number of clergymen who were divorcing their wives.[19]

The climax was reached when, at the instigation of Ben Greet and other members, the Guild asked the new Bishop of London to address it. In reply, Bishop Temple summoned Headlam and told him that the stage was an evil influence and that moral men should "cut it off." When Headlam reported this to the members, an incensed committee, including Headlam, Ben Greet, and several ballet girls, stormed the Palace and held an extended debate with his Lordship over stage morals. The Bishop was a very hard man, according to Headlam, and made one of the girls cry.[20]

Just how hard the Bishop was, Headlam was to find out in 1887 when he applied for a license. Temple refused it, on the grounds that the curate was encouraging young people to frequent the ballet. His appeal to Archbishop Benson was denied. By this time Headlam had had to give up four curacies because of trouble with his rectors. He could not see eye to eye with the Bishop of Manchester over ritualistic matters and thus could find no sanctuary there. Consequently, he turned to devoting his full time to his guilds and to such movements as the Fabian Society.[21]

Meanwhile, the status of actors and acting was steadily being advocated from within the profession itself, notably by Henry Irving. In the early 'eighties the fight to establish the theatre in the community was still being waged, apparently against widespread public opinion. At least, the tone of Irving's Edinburgh address, given at the opening of the Philosophical Society in

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[18] See, for example, "The Watch-Tower," *Theatre*, III [N.S.] (December 1, 1879), [254] 248; *Punch*, LXXXI (November 12, 1881), 219; and the *Saturday Review*, XLVIII (October 11, 1879), 440-441.
[19] *Truth*, XVII (February 10, 1885), 284.
[20] Bettany, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-78.

1881, is noticeably defensive.[22] Praising the actor as a creative artist, Irving pointed out that a player, by his impersonations, exercises a high moral influence, and is, therefore, respectable. The theatre, because of its elevating effect, should be left in peace by reformers, and actors should be esteemed.

For a few years the debate was desultory. *Punch* jibed at Irving's pretentions and his references to his box-office receipts:[23] but his quiet campaign continued. Suddenly, the press broke into a storm of argument when Mrs. Kendal addressed the Social Science Congress at Birmingham. Coming to the Congress at the request of Sir William Temple, whom she had just met,[24] Mrs. Kendal unfortunately spoke in a tone that was sure to arouse both actors and those who felt skeptical of them.[25] Declaring that actors had achieved respectability and were sought after by society, she announced that the terms "actor" and "gentleman" could now be regarded as synonymous. She conceded, however, that the thirst of some actors for newspaper publicity was injurious to the profession, and regretted that drama criticism had deteriorated into either wholesale eulogy or wholesale faultfinding.

Mrs. Kendal recalled in her memoirs that

> The conclusion of my address was marked by loud applause and a very graceful speech by Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, afterwards Lord Eversley. . . . Several of the daily papers were appreciative; . . . but the eulogy was by no means unanimous.[26]

It certainly was not. The speech was regarded as an ill-natured attack on certain actors and drama critics, and it served to fan the burning argument over whether actors were socially desirable. Soon leaving Mrs. Kendal behind, the discussion took on unpleasant ramifications. In January 1885, F. C. Burnand, the burlesque writer, stated in an article that actors were unfit companions for gentlewomen and that nice people revolted against any thought of their children's going on the stage.[27] A

[22] The speech was published in *The Stage As It Is* (Edinburgh 1881) and republished in a collection, *The Drama: Addresses by Henry Irving* (New York 1892), pp. 9-46.

[23] *Punch*, LXXXI (November 19, 1881), 240; (December 3, 1881), 257; (December 10, 1881), 273; (December 31, 1881), 305.

[24] *Dame Madge Kendal By Herself*, edited by Rudolph De Cordoba (London 1933), pp. 182-183.

[25] The speech was published at the time: *The Drama: A Paper Read by Mrs. Kendal at the Congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Birmingham, September*, 1884 (Birmingham [1884]). It has been reprinted in her autobiography (*op. cit.*), pp. 183-197; and in T. Edgar Pemberton, *The Kendals: A Biography* (New York 1900), pp. 165-204.

[26] Kendal, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[27] F. C. Burnand, "Behind the Scenes," *Fortnightly Review*, XXXVII [N.S.], 84-94.

storm of protest followed.[28] Was acting an art, above moral standards? Was it a reputable profession? In either case, was it a proper vocation for the young people who were beginning to turn to it?

Journalists in theatrical and non-theatrical publications debated these questions with all Victorian seriousness. Hamilton Aidé maintained that actors were highly acceptable among an increasingly liberal society and that acting was no more perilous to young ladies than any other work.[29] Coleman and Charles Reade's nephew, Compton Reade, battled at length in the *Dramatic Review* over whether society in the theatre was desirable.[30] John Hollingshead had his say, as did many another.[31] An anonymous writer, claiming to be an actor, wrote a scurrilous "memoir," picturing a majority of stage people as scamps and prostitutes, and thus aroused further debate.[32] By 1889, the *Scot's Observer* could perceive that "a review without an article on the actor's social status will sell high some day."[33]

In the interim, a bitter argument had been brewing as to whether an actor was really a creative artist. The chief glorifier of the player was Irving. As early as the Edinburgh address of 1881, in an effort to establish his profession in the eyes of a Shakespeare-revering audience, he had attacked the belief that the Bard's plays were closet drama.[34] This reopened the debate that Lamb had once started, on the question whether Shakespeare was more effective when read or seen, an argument soon involving Oscar Wilde, Mr. Punch, and others.[35]

[28] See, for example, John Coleman, "The Social Status of the Actor," *National Review*, V (March 1885), 20-28; Sidney Grundy, "Mr. Burnand Behind the Scenes," *Dramatic Review*, I (February 1, 1885), 4, 5; "Our Omnibus-Box," *Theatre*, XIV [N.S.] (March 2, 1885), 150-152. Burnand politically shifted his views in September in "Councils and Comedians," *Fortnightly Review*, XXXVIII [N.S.], 370-381.

[29] Hamilton Aidé, "The Actor's Calling," *Nineteenth Century*, XVII, 521-526.

[30] See *Dramatic Review*, II (November 28 - December 19, 1885), III (March 13 - April 3, 1886).

[31] See, for example, H. Saville Clarke, "The Stage and Society," *Theatre*, XV [N.S.] (September 1, 1885), 135-138; "Going on the Stage," *Dramatic Review* I (July 4, 1885), 360-361; "Ballet Slumming," *Saturday Review*, LX (October 10, 1885), 480; Paul Hookham, "The Poor Player," *Dramatic Review*, III (April 3, 1886), 92-93; T. D., "The Theatrical Profession," *Dramatic Review*, III (June 26, 1886), 213-215; Elizabeth Bessle, "On the Social Popularity of Actresses," *Dramatic Review*, IV (November 13, 1886), 151-152; A. B. Walkley, "The Drama," *Speaker*, IV (July 4, 1891), 15; H. R. Heweis, "The Parson, the Play, and the Ballet," *Universal Review*, I (June 1888), 248-264; Mrs. Lynn Linton, "The Stage as a Profession for Women," *National Review*, V (March 1885), 8-19; Mrs. Kendal, "Dramatic Opinions," *Murray's Magazine*, VI (December 1889), 742. The debate was surveyed by William Archer, "A Storm in Stageland," *About the Theatre* (London 1886), pp. 211-238.

[32] "Corin," *The Truth About the Stage* (London 1885).

[33] *Scot's Observer*, II (June 29, 1889), 151-152.

[34] Irving, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-12.

[35] Oscar Wilde, "Henry the Fourth at Oxford," *Dramatic Review*, I (May 23, 1885), 265; *Punch*, LXXX (May 14, 1881), 225; *Punch* LXXXII (April 15, 1882), 173.

The actor's calling became the subject of more general contention when in 1888 a vicious attack on mummers appeared from the pen of George Moore.[36] Having finished *A Mummer's Wife* only three years before, Moore expressed the opinion that acting was "the lowest of the arts, if it [were] an art at all, and [made] slender demands on the intelligence of the individual exercising it." "You can teach a child to act," he remarked, "but you can teach no child to paint pictures, or model statues, or to write prose. . . ." Actors, he claimed, overcome by their vanity, ridiculously proclaimed their own gentility and artistry. The theatre had become the refuge of idle youth, who were being led by its society into immorality.[37]

Angry defenders of the stage at once sprang forward. In a speech at the Pen and Pencil Club of Edinburgh on October 2. 1888,[38] Irving called on his theatrical ancestors to witness that playing upon the human organism was just as high an art as manipulating any other instrument. Austin, Irving's private secretary, devoted an article to condemning Moore and his editor, Harry Quilter, as sensation seekers, and to praising acting as a creative art.[39] The *Era* and *Dramatic Review* joined voices in calling Moore's essay a fabrication of "silly, idiotic lies."[40] Revived was the old question of how much emphasis should be put on the part that the actor played in bringing the play to life upon the stage. Was he the creator of the artistic effect? Or was he merely the instrument by which the author, the true artist, spoke?

Those who believed that the actor was a creative artist must have felt great satisfaction when, just seven years later, Irving knelt before Queen Victoria and was knighted. As an interpreter of Shakespeare in sumptuous productions that appealed to Victorian taste and veneration, Irving's triumph had probably done more than all the columns we have reviewed to establish the actor in society. With the Queen's recognition of Irving's status, the status of his profession was settled. Irving himself concluded: "We are now as other citizens."[41]

[36] George Moore, "Mummer Worship," *Universal Review,* II (September), 105-118; reprinted in his *Impressions and Opinions* (New York n.d.), pp. 120-138.
[37] Moore, *Impressions and Opinions,* pp. 105, 120.
[38] Printed in the London *Daily Telegraph,* October 3, 1888.
[39] L. F. Austin, "Mr. George Moore and the 'Mummers'; or the Real against the Realistic," *Time,* VIII [N.S.] (November 1888), 524-533.
[40] *Era,* LI (September 29, 1888), 13; "Ignotus," *Dramatic Review,* VIII (November 10, 1888), 244-245.
[41] Austin Brereton. *The Life of Henry Irving* (London 1908), II, 220

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PRESS: ELMER RICE AND HIS CRITICS

by

RALPH L. COLLINS

When in 1934 Montrose Moses and John Mason Brown edited their collection of reviews of plays in the American theatre,[1] Brooks Atkinson noted that the book appeared at a time when drama critics were in disfavor. In that year, as at present, they were being accused of standing between the play and the audience. "The point," said Atkinson, "is a practical one. As a rule plays do not succeed without some favorable comment in the daily newspapers. Unless some of the reviewers write of them with enthusiasm, they cannot survive the first two crucial weeks when the fate of a production at the box office is usually decided."[2] Although there are those who scoff at the belief that the press wields so much power, and cite such hits as *Tobacco Road* and *Abie's Irish Rose* as evidence to the contrary, still I should say that the majority opinion has it that, for good or ill, a play succeeds or fails the morning following its opening, when the critics have their say.

Despite the fact that the relations of the playwright and the press demand and get almost constant attention, no one has thoroughly canvassed the subject and the innumerable subsidiary questions attached to it. One would like to know, of course, just how much influence the reviews have had. In addition, one would like to know how consistent the critics have been, how often they have recognized and encouraged talent, whether they have helped to improve standards of taste and, if so, how; one would like to know how free from prejudice they themselves have been, how ready to make amends, how thoughtful and painstaking, the limitations of their medium considered.

[1] Montrose J. Moses and John Mason Brown, *The American Theatre, As Seen by Its Critics, 1792-1934* (New York 1934).

[2] Brooks Atkinson, "American Drama Criticism Since Its Earliest Days with a Note on Current Problems," New York *Times,* November 4, 1934.

Immediately the objection will be raised that important as these questions may be, none is sufficiently qualified to answer them, and that were there such a person and were he so foolhardy as to venture upon a report, he would find few to agree with his conclusions. Nevertheless, I feel that an inadequately qualified person might at least make a beginning. He might, with some authority, examine the record of one playwright. The playwright chosen would not have to be either exceptionally bad or exceptionally good, but his plays ought to be varied in kind, and written and produced over a considerable period of time.

In my opinion no American author of today better qualifies for such an experiment than Elmer Rice—a man in and out of the theatre more than thirty years; a man who has written expressionistic, realistic, satirical, and sentimental plays, more than twenty of which have been produced; a man who has frequently fought not only the reviewers but also what he considered other vested interests in the theatre; a man who more than once has asked publicly for an "analyst" who could "discern any non-accidental relationship between the merits of the plays . . . and the place which has been accorded them in the Broadway theatre."[3]

A summary of Rice's career shows him identified closely with the significant developments in the American theatre of the last thirty-five years. In the summer of 1914 Rice, then a youth of twenty-one, stood up in a stage box at the new Candler Theatre in New York to accept an amazing ovation for his first play, *On Trial.* Although he wrote a considerable number of plays in the next few years and had a fair number of them produced with moderate success, it was not until 1923 with *The Adding Machine* that he achieved any critical stature in the theatre. During the late 'twenties and early 'thirties he wrote steadily, and in the period from 1929 to 1934 he reached at once both the height of his productiveness and the depths of his despair with the commercial stage and with the reviewers. A self-imposed exile from the theatre and a short-lived but stormy association with the Federal Theatre Project followed. With the formation of the Playwrights' Company, he returned to Broadway, where, since 1938, he has been less of a storm center and, save for *Flight to the West,* perhaps also a less significant dramatist.

[3] Elmer Rice, New York *Times,* December 25, 1938.

In his famous "farewell" to the theatre, published in the New York *Times* on November 11, 1934, Rice wrote:

> For twenty years I have been in the theatre. I have had seventeen or eighteen plays produced. Some have been great successes, some utter failures; most have been in-between. From my point of view, the relative merits of my plays are not reflected either by their critical reception or their box-office receipts.

As in other articles written for the newspapers, he maintained that the reviewers knew little about their trade, held up mere entertainment as the *sine qua non,* and were themselves infected by the glitter of Broadway:

> . . . taking them by and large, and making due allowance for honorable exceptions, they are the bulwarks of the commercial theatre. For the most part men without intellect, perception, sensitivity or background, they pander to the tastes of the empty-headed, the bored, the insensitive, the complacent, who constitute the bulk of the agency trade and supply the golden stream upon which the Broadway theatre feeds.

To analyze and evaluate the justice of Rice's contention, I should have a yardstick, no matter how fragile it may be. Although I cannot expect to get entire agreement on any classification of Rice's plays that I may offer, I feel that the attempt is none the less essential. Perhaps, now that some perspective is possible, a kind of working agreement on the merits of Rice's plays may be achieved. At least there is the likelihood that those who have seen or read most of the plays, will not be too far from one another in their appraisal. This is my hope for the one offered below.

First I would suggest that a small number of Rice's plays be eliminated from an evaluation of their merit. They might be called the potboilers, either confessedly so by the author or so in the general opinion. For example, the plays produced commercially from 1914 to 1922 were all very close to being written for profit alone. There is certainly excuse for this kind of a beginning in the theatre. Rice needed the money, the plays were satisfactory enough pieces of workmanship, and, at the very time they were pleasing the paying customers, Rice was experimenting with interesting social ideas in *The Iron Cross, The Home of the Free,* and *A Diadem of Snow,* and preparing for one of his best plays, *The Adding Machine.*

As the potboilers were written almost entirely for entertain-

ment and have little or no serious intent or content, they should not be judged for what they never were intended to be. In this category, I would place six of the twenty-two plays which Rice has had produced commercially. They are: *On Trial, For the Defense, It Is the Law, Cock Robin, Two on an Island, and Dream Girl.*

The remaining sixteen plays, as well as a number of others either unproduced, as *Not for Children,* or produced semi-privately, as *The Iron Cross* and *The Home of the Free,* had a more serious intention. Whether successful or not, or in whatever form written, all of these plays carried a message. Indeed, Rice has himself maintained that in the course of his long career he has attempted to express only one idea, the idea

> . . . that there is nothing as important in life as freedom and that the dominant concern not only of every human being, but of all of us as we function as members of society should be with the attainment of freedom of the body and of the mind through liberation from political autocracy, economic slavery, religious superstition, hereditary prejudice and herd psychology and the attainment of freedom of the soul through liberation from fear, jealousy, hatred, possessiveness and self-delusion.[4]

In so far as I can evaluate the sixteen produced plays and can interpret the considered judgment of time, critical opinion, and the common reader, they fall into three categories.[5]

The good plays are those that are clearly superior in their idea, their construction, their harmony, force, or eloquence, or by their combination of some of these qualities. Realizing that even with this group, as with later ones, certain plays are superior to others, I would still name five as good: *Street Scene, The Adding Machine, Counsellor-at-Law, The Left Bank,* and *Flight to the West.*

The second category I term fair plays, and I mean that these plays were fully as well intentioned as the good ones but that through some fault of structure, of overstatement or oversimplification, of the failure of the writing in some way to measure up to the theme, they can be considered significant only in part and not as a whole. *We the People, Judgment Day, Close Harmony,*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] The terms I employ are, of course, relative. I use them as Joseph Wood Krutch says a reviewer uses such terms, ". . . 'relative to the standards set by the prevailing level of the dramatic and theatrical art.' " "A Defence of the Professional Reviewer," *Theatre Annual,* 1943 (New York 1944), p. 22.

American Landscape, Between Two Worlds, and *A New Life* can, I think, be put in this category.

Finally, there are the poor plays, plays about which opinion would differ from the opinion of those in the fair category to this extent: one would wish that the fair plays had been wholly equal to their conception; one would wish that the poor plays, for all their serious intention, had never been written. Even when some excuse may be made for them, as collaborations, adaptations, as plays written after the form had outlived its usefulness, they are yet so halting, so inadequate that I am sure almost everyone would agree that *Wake Up, Jonathan, The Mongrel, The Subway, See Naples and Die,* and *Black Sheep* are decidedly poor plays.

The box-office record of Rice's plays has been just about what he indicates: "some great successes, some utter failures, most in-between." More statistically, the number of performances has ranged from 4 for *Black Sheep* to 602 for *Street Scene.* If we take 100 performances as the customary mark for a hit, there have been nine successes, with two others nearly making the grade. In the order of number of performances, the successful plays were: *Street Scene* (602), *On Trial* (365), *Dream Girl* (348), *Counsellor-at-Law* (292), *The Left Bank* (242), *Flight to the West* (136), *It Is the Law* (125), *Wake Up, Jonathan* (105), and *Cock Robin* (100). The remaining plays, box-office failures, were: *Two on an Island* (96), *Judgment Day* (93), *For the Defense* (77), *The Adding Machine* (72), *A New Life* (70), *See Naples and Die* (62), *We the People* (49), *American Landscape* (43), *The Subway* (35), *The Mongrel* (32), *Between Two Worlds* (32), *Close Harmony* (24), and *Black Sheep* (4).[6]

This record is interesting. For one thing it shows that all the potboilers, with the single exception of *For the Defense,* were successes. Of the five good plays only one failed, and of the five poor plays only one succeeded. Perhaps, then, our principal inquiry into the effect of the reviews on the life of the plays will center in the group of fair plays, of which not one was a success.

Turning first to the four plays that I have called good, we find that the record in the aggregate is, except for *The Adding*

[6] Statistical data here and elsewhere in this article as to the number of performances are taken from the various volumes of Burns Mantle's *Best Plays* series (New York 1920-1947).

Machine, fairly sound. This is not to suggest, of course, that they found unqualified favor with all the reviewers, for *Street Scene* was the only play—indeed, the only one ever written by Rice—that received a unanimously favorable press.

Of the eight reviewers reporting on *Street Scene,* Hammond gave the most casual account—not, I think, because he felt the play was insignificant, but simply because his method of reviewing, in his later days, was that of the casual conversationalist. His reviews were half the length of those by his colleagues and were often given over in great part to easy, if delightful, synopses of plots. His review of *Street Scene* commended the play briefly for its fidelity, then grew lyrical in an account of the double murder in the play, calling it "one of the most terrifying that it has ever been my privilege to attend," and finally trailed off into a paragraph praising Al Smith and his wife for arriving early at the theatre and not tramping on people as do the fashionable playgoers.[7]

The other reviewers were variously emotional in their praise and, by flashes, penetrating in their insight. But without doubt here, as often through these years, it remained for Atkinson to write the one really sound piece of drama criticism. He spoke of the play's authenticity, of the truth of its characterization; but he did point out what he considered a basic defect. *Street Scene* suffered, he thought, through want of a point of view: "Mr. Rice's concluding philosophy which intelligently discusses the significance of this neighborhood incident is nearly lost in the jumble of a street panorama."[8]

When, however, four months later, the Pulitzer award to *Street Scene* gave Atkinson the occasion for another column, he returned to the point he had made previously. He yet felt that the play might have been more exciting had it been stamped with Rice's personality. However, he now saw reason for the objective, Chekhovian approach, and went on to deepen his discussion of the accuracy of Rice's picture, pointing out that this selective accuracy was itself art. He found *Street Scene* "composed and purposeful. As long as Hogarth's scrabbling cartoons and Daumier's vivid figures are accepted as art, Mr. Rice's fuliginous 'city-scape' deserves the same distinction."[9]

[7] Percy Hammond, New York *Herald-Tribune,* January 11, 1929.
[8] Atkinson, New York *Times,* January 11, 1929.
[9] *Ibid.,* May 19, 1929.

During the long run of *Street Scene,* Rice had the disheartening experience of seeing two of his plays fail in spite of the prestige of the prize winner. These failures, however—and they were failures simply because *The Subway* and *See Naples and Die* were poor plays—did not prevent him from offering in quick succession two new and good plays. It is true that *The Left Bank* and *Counsellor-at-Law* were in 1931 not equal to *Street Scene* or *The Adding Machine* and that time has not given them greater importance. But they were skillfully wrought stage pieces, true to their purpose, and based on authentic characterization. They had the success they deserved, with 242 and 292 performances, not to mention a revival of *Counsellor-at-Law* a dozen years later.

It is interesting that the two plays had the same box score: each received three favorable reviews, two condemnations, and two lukewarm reports. The chief interest in this score lies in the fact that, although the plays differed enormously in content, setting, and method of presentation, these differences not only did not change the score, they did not, in the main, change the position of the reviewers either. Atkinson and Pollock were favorable to both plays; Brown was decidedly unfavorable to both; Gabriel was "yes and no" in both instances. Lockridge was just short of writing a favorable review of *The Left Bank* and was high in praise of *Counsellor-at-Law.* Contrariwise, Robert Garland was only fairly favorable to *Counsellor-at-Law* and completely disapproving of *The Left Bank.* With Hammond alone was there any wide divergence. Although he was not extravagant in his praise of *The Left Bank,* his review must still be called favorable; *Counsellor-at-Law,* on the other hand, was to him so disappointing that he made known he had not cared to stay until the final curtain. Both Hammond and Brown, writing the only really unfavorable reviews of *Counsellor-at-Law,* made somewhat grudging restitution in later columns.

Possibly, an explanation of the fact that reviewers seem to stand still while playwrights develop, or at least change, is furnished by a statement of Atkinson: "Even those who feel most bitter about drama reviewing will be willing to grant critics personal prejudices and limitations, which are humanly unavoidable." Atkinson, however, went on to say:

> But if it is true that reviewers keep theatregoers from plays that they would enjoy, the function of newspaper criticism is being abused. For

newspaper reviewing is not a form of the higher criticism; it is a practical form of news reporting.[10]

I think it is likely that few prospective theatregoers were kept away from *The Left Bank* and *Counsellor-at-Law* because of these contrary reports, but the divergency is distressing, and we shall find that in other instances it has operated in a harmful manner.

After 1931 the record shows but one good play, although *Dream Girl,* and a few others are at least debatable. The season of 1940-1941, the one before our entry into the War, was distinguished by only four plays that can be classified as anything more than entertainment. Of these four, one was an importation, *The Corn is Green,* and another an adaptation, *Native Son.* The other two tackled the problem of America's place in the world crisis. They were Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* and Rice's *Flight to the West.*

Flight to the West did not have the success of *Watch on the Rhine* and the earlier Sherwood play, *There Shall Be No Night.* And rightly, I think, as neither in conception nor in persuasive eloquence was it their equal. Still, its run of 136 performances, in comparison with the runs of such popular plays of that season as Kaufman's *George Washington Slept Here* (173), Hart's *Lady in the Dark* (467), Rose Franken's *Claudia* (722), Joseph H. Field's and Jerome Chodorov's *My Sister Eileen* (864), and Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1,444), does seem a severe commentary on the intelligence of American theatregoers. Can the critics be held in any way responsible?

Their verdict on *Flight to the West* was four in favor, one against, and five moderately impressed. But, of the favorable critics, only Atkinson was wholehearted in his praise; he ranked it with *Street Scene* as Rice's best work. Kelcey Allen was next to Atkinson in his high opinion of the play. Watts thought it "welcomely topical" and an extremely effective piece of dramatic journalism. Lockridge considered it the first play since Sherwood's to go about the theatre's major business: to reflect and comment on contemporary life; but he did speak in some detail of the inept playwriting. Of the moderate reviews, Kronenberger's and Anderson's offered, it seems to me, legitimate objections to the play, while at the same time insisting that it was very much

[10] *Ibid.,* November 4, 1934.

worth the attention of the serious playgoer. The remaining reports might easily have cooled the ardor of prospective spectators: Brown—though the "new play holds the attention, it creates no real enthusiasm"; Coleman—"it talks persuasively but seldom gets around to action"; Whipple—"not sufficiently stimulating to make it this extraordinary drama we had hoped for." Anderson felt that the play did not flare into drama until Act Three; Freedley, on the other hand, declared that, although Act One was electrifying, "the remainder of the play bogs down in a morass of talk and melodrama."[11]

The critics cannot be held responsible for the long runs of *Arsenic and Old Lace* and the other escapist comedies of 1940-1941. Nor should one begrudge these plays their success. Indeed, although the reviewers have the power to prevent a play from becoming a hit, they have little to do with the snowball phenomenon of a play that catches the fancy of the public. The objection to the critics is not to their favorable reception of the escapist comedies, but to their initial failure to suggest the true significance of *Flight to the West,* offered shortly before Pearl Harbor, and their failure to continue to press its merits upon the public.

The case of the remaining good play, *The Adding Machine,* is a troublesome one. Even today a considerable group of readers and spectators would, I suppose, consider it a mediocre achievement. A play written wholly in the expressionistic form now seems ponderous, repetitive, and dependent for its power on novel effects. Expressionistic plays, in fact, achieved at the last a delicate irony: having as an avowed purpose the distillation of meaning, they succeeded usually in making the spectator or reader complain of the triteness of that meaning. Such an effect was the almost inevitable result of the expressionists' throwing over the aid of characterization and putting their sole reliance on bizarre repetitions of theme.

But, granting all this, there was a time in the early 'twenties when expressionism had its day in the American theatre, and when, both intrinsically and as potent influences on later drama, the plays of this genre deserved to be evaluated fairly. Did the critics fairly estimate *The Adding Machine*?

When one considers the facts about the original production—

[11] Atkinson, *Times,* Kelcey Allen, *Women's Wear Daily,* Richard Watts, jr., *Herald-Tribune,* Richard Lockridge, *Sun,* Louis Kronenberger, *PM,* Brown, *Post,* Robert Coleman, *Daily Mirror,* Sidney Whipple, *World-Telegram,* Anderson, *Journal-American,* December 31, 1940; Freedley, *Morning Telegraph,* January 1, 1941.

produced by the Theatre Guild, directed by Philip Moeller, designed by Lee Simonson, incidental music by Deems Taylor, a cast composed of Dudley Digges, Helen Westley, Margaret Wycherly, Elise Bartlett, Edward G. Robinson, and Louis Calvert—one might confidently expect a success. A run of 72 performances is hardly that. It is even less understandable in view of our considered judgment of the play today and the astonishing record of performances it has had in our little theatres over the last twenty-five years.

For Rice, the press's reception of *The Adding Machine* has always served as an example of inept reviewing. And certainly, if we take as proof of his contention, as Rice did, the review of Alan Dale, the case is strong against the critics.[12] When, however, we look at all the reviews, we find the picture not so black—even though we may conclude the press to have been unfair and decidedly effective in retarding attendance. Of five reviews the morning after the première, only one can be said to be completely unfavorable; but, with the best will in the world, we cannot classify the others as better than moderate. We cannot agree with Rice that the play was "pretty generally ridiculed," but we must say that few readers of the reviews would have been led to the belief that here was a play, whatever its shortcomings, that might well have an important place in the annals of the American theatre.

Hammond failed to understand it and, though perhaps not by design, left his readers with the impression that *The Adding Machine* defied comprehension. "Very wise," concluded his review, "and very wild, and, so far as we are concerned, very insoluble. We do not say that it is not good, for we were not taken into its confidence—and we wanted so much to be."[13] Although Woollcott was kinder and had no trouble with the play's meaning—as who could?—he managed to undermine confidence by suggesting Rice's limitations. He held that such a play, written in such a form, made demands upon its author's imagination that Rice could not meet: " 'The Adding Machine' has two or three moments of insight and inspiration. For the rest, it is an ordinary mind finding outlet in a play that is chiefly interesting because its form is novel."[14]

[12] Rice, New York *Times*, September 23, 1944.
[13] Percy Hammond, New York *Tribune*, March 20, 1923.
[14] Alexander Woollcott, New York *Herald*, March 20, 1923.

In the opinions of Heywood Broun, James Craig, and an unnamed reviewer in the *Times,* the play had scenes of merit, the acting and production were superb, it was an interesting example of the newer expressionism; but, with all the excellencies, it contained ideas that had to be deplored. Their evaluation is rather well summarized in these statements by Broun:

> Incidentally, "The Adding Machine" may serve as the Guild's answer to the familiar charge that it has done nothing to promote the American drama. This is a play by an American, and it is a good play. Well, most of it is good. A little is cheap, some is muddled, but it is all alive.[15]

I do not object to the critic's inalienable right to discuss weaknesses; I do, however, object to the amount of space devoted to destructive criticism. When a significant play is off the path of Broadway entertainment and thus likely to be avoided by the ordinary playgoer, it is more than ever the duty of the critic to induce the playgoer to see it. Simply from the point of view of the purpose and the experimental nature of *The Adding Machine,* if not of its absolute merit, I consider the press guilty here of faulty judgment.

The record of the critics on these five good plays by Rice is not, then, as commendable as first glance would indicate. Although there were individual reviewers whose judgment was sound on all the plays—or, at least, on all they saw—the record as a whole now appears to have been detrimental to the best interests of the theatre. Insufficient encouragement was given to American interest in the darkening international scene; there was some bias and a considerable failure to appreciate and foster new techniques.

Our consideration takes us next to a group of five plays written from 1921 to 1932. They are not concentrated, but spread over this period; they are not, as far as one can tell, the result of any specific cause, within or without the author. They appear in Rice's work, as similar plays appear in the work of other dramatists, as poor plays—poor in conception, poor in execution.

We may pass quickly over the first two. *Wake Up, Jonathan,* produced in 1921, was a joint effort of Hatcher Hughes and Rice, and, if Woollcott is to be believed, Rice "joined the manuscript late in its history." The other, *The Mongrel,* was an adaptation

[15] Heywood Broun, New York *World,* March 20, 1923.

of a play by the Austrian, Hermann Bahr, and as the text of the adaptation is not now available, there is no way to determine responsibility for its merits and defects. The reviewers were fairly consistent in pointing out that *The Mongrel* had neither bark nor bite, and its 32 performances are about what one would expect from its critical reception.

Wake Up, Jonathan, the text of which may still be read by the curious, is a tiresome comedy involving the chastening of a tycoon who tries to apply his business methods to his home, his wife, and his children. The press was divided, with most of the opinion bad, as it should have been. The most severe was Broun. "The play," he said, "is a frank and permeditated [*sic*] attempt to gather the considerable financial rewards which often come to the dramatist who observes the success of various cheap theatrical stratagems and then stuffs them all into one play."[16] The fact that *Wake Up, Jonathan* was a success, with 105 performances, despite the reviewers and its manifest weaknesses, is, I take it, another tribute to the appeal of Mrs. Fiske, who played the wife.

The remaining three plays—*The Subway* and *See Naples and Die* in 1929, and *Black Sheep* in 1932—were all original work, belong to the time of Rice's greatest productiveness, and must, therefore, engage our attention at greater length. As a group, they were as unsuccessful as any Rice has ever had produced.

In January 1929, just two weeks after the opening of *Street Scene,* at the little off-Broadway Cherry Lane Theatre, the Lenox Hill Players offered *The Subway,* a play that Rice had written soon after *The Adding Machine.* It failed for a variety of reasons: it was performed too late, that is, after the fairly well-accepted expressionism of O'Neill, John Howard Lawson, Rice, and others in the early 'twenties had run its course; its production by the semi-professional group was earnest but inadequate to the demands of the script; and, except in one or two episodes, it fell far below the power of *The Adding Machine* and no doubt was a big disappointment to playgoers fresh from witnessing *Street Scene.*

The reviews of *The Subway* were so uniformly kind that one is led to the conclusion that the critics either were trying to make amends for their earlier treatment of *The Adding Machine* or were still infected by the enthusiasm created by *Street Scene.*

[16] *Ibid.,* January 18, 1921.

It is true that none of them thought *The Subway* a good play; but they castigated the producers for not having taken it earlier when it might have succeeded, they found it "not an uninteresting play," they recognized that the production hurt the play's chances, and they gave high praise to isolated scenes and to the intention of the whole.

If, in their wish to be kind, the critics were influenced to think better of *The Subway* than it perhaps deserved, by the beginning of the 1929-1930 season no such compulsion prevailed. Although ten years later Rice contended that *See Naples and Die* "laughed at the autocracy of Mussolini and at the power politics of Central Europe," the reviewers at the time of the opening could find no such meaning in the play. To them, and, it must be confessed, to later readers, the play appeared to be an extremely brittle and silly comedy, with a minimum of telling satire and a naïve notion that the only thing funnier than a "wisecrack" was another one, more vulgar and more strained.

Thoroughly bored from listening to the parade of cheap, smart talk by an American heiress, a former newspaperman, and a variety of Continental types, the critics flailed about with vigor. If they can be taken to task at all for their response to *See Naples and Die,* it is that, save for Atkinson, they did not find time to offer any helpful criticism. With this play, as with others, Atkinson was tireless in advising Rice that his forte lay, not in satirical comedy of manners, but in serious, social drama.

See Naples and Die failed, though not resoundingly. Perhaps the short life of the play, written in the facile form usually admired by Broadway audiences, may have been due not so much to its crudity and its damnation by the critics as to the behavior of Wall Street. In the fall of 1929 it was no longer fashionable or wise to be smart and clever.

If we cannot be certain that the failure of *See Naples and Die* was caused by the reviews, there can be no doubt about the reason for the closing of *Black Sheep.* An early composition, it appeared a year after the successful *Left Bank* and *Counsellor-at-Law* had been offered to the public, and while the latter was still on the boards. Produced and directed by Rice himself, the play was judged properly to be his sole responsibility, and so, when the critics found it bad, they pulled no punches. It was by all odds the most severely reviewed of Rice's plays, Pollock

alone having a kind word for it. And by all odds, it was Rice's worst failure. It closed after 4 performances.

Reading *Black Sheep* today, one finds oneself agreeing with the reviewers who found it hard to believe that Rice had written the play. It proposes a serious subject, the trials of a literary genius in making his peace with the Philistine forces represented by his family. But Rice's treatment of the theme was Grade C Hollywood. Various critics pointed out pityingly that *Black Sheep* was part of Rice's juvenilia, a product of a much earlier period. Since the play is not even equal to such an easy, but deft piece of stagecraft as *On Trial,* I prefer to assign it to what Rice called his "long and unhappy interlude in Hollywood," which "almost destroyed my capacity for thinking and writing at all,"[17] and which he satirized in his first novel, *A Voyage to Purilia.*

Although Garland concluded his review witheringly—"I, for one, kept wondering why some long-suffering cash customer didn't rise to his feet, and, crying out 'Baa! Baa! Black Sheep,' take his hat and his departure and go on home"[18]—most of the critics wrote more in sorrow than in anger. Hammond, Gabriel, and Brown, ordinarily rather severe with Rice, pointed to the obvious fact that the play was an early effort, quickly covered its manifest defects, and avoided using it as a springboard, in Gibbsian fashion, for displays of wit. It remained for Atkinson and Lockridge, most often Rice's champions, to reprimand him sharply.

There were two reasons for Atkinson's dismay and concern over *Black Sheep.* The subject of the play, he contended, in the hands of anyone, was dubious, for "the artist is the drama's heaviest burden," always a craven fellow about whom "it is difficult to share the deathless devotion that subdues all the other characters in the play." And, as with *See Naples and Die,* Atkinson again drew Rice's attention to the fact that his best work always had some broad, social basis. Similarly, Lockridge was distressed that Rice had succumbed like others to writing of "the conflict between the Artist and the Conventions," and he bluntly stated his opinion of the play's worth: "It is also, by several lengths at the nadir of his career as a composer of pieces for the theatre."[19] Hard words, these; and perhaps they and

[17] Rice, New York *Times,* December 25, 1938.
[18] Robert Garland, New York *World-Telegram,* October 14, 1932.
[19] Atkinson, New York *Times,* Lockridge, New York *Sun,* October 14, 1932.

Atkinson's advice may be considered by some outside the province of the reviewer. Offered, however, in the spirit that Atkinson and Lockridge offered them, and backed, in each instance, by a long string of sympathetic reviews, they seem to me right and proper and the quintessence of sound criticism.

In summation, the reviewers of the poor plays showed themselves consistent and watchful guardians of the American theatre, its public and, indeed, its playwrights.

Finally, we come to consideration of the fair plays, the most important group for the purpose of this article. There are six of these plays, and in order of merit I would list them thus: *We the People, Judgment Day, American Landscape, Close Harmony, Between Two Worlds,* and *A New Life*—the best barely missing the status of good play, the worst being still some distance from the category of poor play. Not one was a success at the box office, although *Judgment Day,* with 93 performances, almost made the grade. Four of the plays, by virtue of their subject matter, their composition and production, and their treatment by the reviewers and the public, belong together. The remaining two will be considered first.

Close Harmony, earlier by ten years than the next play in the group, offers some of the difficulties we encountered when considering Rice's other collaborations. The joint work of Rice and Dorothy Parker, an adaptation of a short story by the latter, the play was produced in New York in November 1924. It may, in fact, be improper to consider it an integral part of Rice's dramatic work since many of the critics asserted that the play was nearly all Mrs. Parker's, Rice merely helping her in her first dramatic attempt.

Close Harmony, or *The Lady Next Door* as it was called on the road, is distinctly a mediocre piece, despite the pleasure that comes from hearing the truthful accents of dull suburbanites, devoid of the glamor which these people often have on the stage. In New York the audiences were as apathetic as most of the characters in the play, and it closed after 24 performances. There is, I think, a lesson to be learned from its failure. Arguing only from this play, we could say that although reviewers may have the power to kill a play or to prevent it from having the success it might have had, they cannot force its acceptance. Just one vote was cast against *Close Harmony.* Six critics were moderate

in their praise, but in the main more favorable than not; three hailed it with great enthusiasm.

This high praise came from the pens of the mighty. "It is a piece all compact with parallels and full of grim gayety, domesticity, and dull fates," said Stark Young; not only accurate photography, but humorous and possessing deep emotion, thought Broun; ". . . as crowded an hour as you will discover in current, Broadway dramatic art," was Hammond's opinion; and with a sob in his throat, Woollcott announced that *Close Harmony* "resorts so seldom to stencils and achieves one or two moments of human intercourse so delicate in its fabric and wrought with such tact and intuition that these clumsy hands are abashed for once and are hereby withheld."[20] Eight months before most of these reviewers had grudgingly scattered a few withered flowers before *The Adding Machine*. Does one go too far to suggest that the above floral display was occasioned more by the magic that Mrs. Parker's name exercised on certain of her friends than by any virtues inherent in the script? Perhaps. And yet a postcript might be added: with 24 performances, what value good fellowship?

The other play to be considered independently of the group written in the 'thirties, is separated by almost twenty years from *Close Harmony*. With Betty Field as its star and directed by Rice, *A New Life* was produced by The Playwrights' Company in September 1943. It ran for 70 performances.

A New Life is only just short of being a poor play. Although it dealt with a significant subject—what the start and the education of a child should be in 1943—the writing was so glib and the situations so pat that *A New Life* not only did not come to grips with its subject, but even the major conversion in the play, as Pollock pointed out, came off stage. We are told that the hero saw the light; we are denied the same light, and consequently, find the conclusion wholly contrived. The play, moreover, has other serious defects. Not until it is well along do we realize that the major intention of the playwright is not, as we had thought, to portray as graphically as possible, and in full view of the audience, the birth of a baby. And the villains are stock: they are rich; they are industrialists; they are, of necessity, villains.

[20] Stark Young, New York *Times*, December 3, 1924; Broun, New York *World*, Hammond, New York *Herald-Tribune*, Woollcott, New York *Sun*, December 1, 1924.

The reviews were almost uniformly unfavorable, only two out of sixteen calling *A New Life* a good play. Kronenberger's report, no harsher than several others, offers an index to the composite opinion. He found the play to have serious faults, not merely faults of clumsy writing, but faults of bad taste:

> What is far more culpable is that most of *A New Life* is written *at* the audience, even to the extent of trying to raise a laugh in the most inappropriate places. It is merely glib of Mr. Rice to picture the life of a maternity ward for what it is worth in stock humourous recognitions; it is merely shallow of him to write his crucial scenes as though they were public rather than private matters. But when—to offer the most glaring example—he portrays a woman in labor for anything he can get out of it, one can only be appalled.[21]

It may be said that the critics did not keep proportion in their reviews: although only three of *A New Life's* nine scenes were devoted to the delivery of the baby, most of the critics gave half their space, usually in sharp attack, to this aspect of the play.

In view of the total effect of the play—a good intention weakened by sensational and somewhat irrelevant scenes and by a side-stepping of the main issue—and the accurate reporting of this result by the press, the 70 performances achieved by *A New Life* testify less to the power of the press than to the prurient curiosity of the public.

The six years from January 1933 to December 1938 represent a stormy period in Rice's relationship with the public, the government, his colleagues, and the critics. During this time he wrote at least five plays, four of which were produced; he criticized the reporters sharply from the lecture platform and in the columns of the New York *Times*; he said his valedictory to Broadway; he became head of the New York Federal Theatre, only to originate the "Living Newspaper," see it frowned upon by Washington, and resign in protest at what he considered unwarranted interference; he tried his hand at a long novel; and finally he returned to the theatre, this time as one of the founders of The Playwrights' Company.

The four produced plays, though not Rice's best work, are very creditable social dramas. In a sense they were living newspapers, although they could be more meaningful as they were

[21] Kronenberger, *PM*, September 17, 1943.

not tied to the irrelevancies of real events. In January 1933, at the height of the Depression, *We the People* considered the national situation and made a survey of the economic ills from which the country was suffering. In September 1934, *Judgment Day* looked abroad and pointed to the growing Nazi menace. A month later, *Between Two Worlds* attempted to effect a compromise between communism and capitalism. Slightly more than four years later, in the same season that Rice directed Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois,* his own *American Landscape* called for a serious consideration and defense of American principles. *American Landscape,* said Rice,

> is—for me, at least—a logical development of all the plays that have gone before it. It is, once more, a plea for tolerance, for freedom of the mind [and?] of the spirit. It is an affirmation of the American tradition of liberty and of the American way of life. It is a call to the colors, not in a military sense but in the sense that the principles of our democracy, now in grave danger, are something worth defending from enemies without and within.[22]

Serious as they were, coming at as significant a time in the history of the country and the world as they did, these plays were potentially important. One might expect that many people would see and be affected by them. The fact is they all failed—to the articulate distress of Rice. Did the critics give the plays a fair hearing? Was their short life the direct result of their reception by the press?

The failure of *We the People* cannot, I think, be attributed to the critics, although three of them damned it. At the close of his review, Lockridge offered what seems to me good reasons why such a play would not command a following:

> . . . it will hardly be popular. Liberals will see it and approve; conservatives and radicals alike will object to its picture. And most theatregoers, not in the least wanting to be preached at, will, I fear, stay quietly away. And that will be too bad.[23]

Lockridge's review was highest in praise of *We the People*; Burns Mantle, Hammond, and Atkinson felt that, despite some confusion and an overburdened content, it was a genuinely moving experience. The unfavorable reports were penned by Gabriel, Garland, and Brown. In retrospect, two of these reflect

[22] Rice, New York *Times,* December 25, 1938.
[23] Lockridge, New York *Sun,* January 23, 1933.

more upon the writers than they do upon *We the People* and Rice. The distasteful aspects of Brown's review may be found (1) in a misstatement—the play, he said, left the audience cold, although the other critics admitted the enthusiasm of the spectators; (2) in snobbishness—he was greatly bothered that such a proletarian play had been offered at the patrician Empire Theatre, and he found it a rather clumsy imitation of Coward's *Cavalcade;* and (3) in a nasty comment on Rice's entire work—"Mr. Elmer Rice, who has written some interesting if overrated plays in his time. . . ."[24] It remained, however, for Garland to be insulting:

> Having written a lot of plays and accumulated a lot of money, Elmer Rice is hot and bothered. As a matter of fact he's in a blue funk, and doesn't know what to do about it. Not knowing what to do about it, he has overwritten a play and brought it to the Empire Theatre.[25]

Granting that Garland's facts were true—as they were not—what business has a reviewer to concern himself with the playwright's biography? His business is the play.

Notwithstanding the fate of *We the People*, the season of 1934-1935 saw Rice try again. He had before now both written and directed his plays. In the autumn of 1934 Mrs. Rice (Hazel Levy) took over the Belasco Theatre, and here, under his own production, Rice staged *Judgment Day* in September and *Between Two Worlds* in October.

The reception of *Judgment Day* by the critics was very similar to that of *We the People*. Brown thought it "almost as funny and as old-fashioned as 'The Drunkard,' "[26] as, strangely enough, did Anderson. In a more serious tone, Atkinson and Hammond found the melodrama excessive and cautioned Rice to be more temperate in the future. On the other side, Lockridge, Gabriel, and Pollock rejoiced in the play's violence and hailed it as a probable hit.

Certainly, *Judgment Day* is not without merit. Whether because of the merit, or the conflicting opinions of the press, or the fact that the play closely paralleled the headlines in the daily papers, it came close to achieving a success. What is more important for our purpose is the altercation that arose between

[24] Brown, New York *Evening Post,* January 23, 1933.
[25] Garland, New York *World-Telegram,* January 23, 1933.
[26] Brown, New York *Post,* September 13, 1934.

the author and the reviewers over its reception. Two weeks after the play opened, the first page of the drama section of the Sunday *Times* was devoted to a debate between Rice and Atkinson. It was not, however, a real debate because the protagonists did not try so much to defend their opinions of the play as to widen the discussion to include such matters as the responsibilities of play reviewers and what constituted proper material for dramatic treatment.

Atkinson again spoke of his admiration for Rice's burning convictions, but he re-enforced the opinion expressed in his earlier review of *Judgment Day* that the craftsmanship, both in the writing and the staging of the play, was so weak that "it defeats its own purposes and sounds like stage buncombe."

Although Rice did not object to Atkinson's evaluation of *Judgment Day,* he did think that the sentence, "But Mr. Rice is not a temperate writer," framed an issue that required discussion. All important drama, he believed, was a result of the "clash of wills and the parade of passion." He outlined some of the difficulties he had had in getting his earlier plays accepted, first by the managers and then by the critics. Despite these difficulties—particularly those caused "by some of the bright young men from the backwoods, who grace the dramatic columns of certain metropolitan newspapers," and by the fact that the American theatre is so often given over to "gags, wisecracks, tap dancing, knock-about farce, fustian romance and polite adulteries"—he felt that he had found an audience interested in the dramatization of serious problems:

> I believe that there is a place in the theatre for passion, for high words and vivid emotions that stir the blood and quicken the pulses. I cannot discuss fascism with a polite smile or tolerant laugh, nor depict brutal oppression with a twinkle in my eye. The cheers of the audiences who are coming to see "Judgment Day" convince me that they are thrilled to hear a fighting subject discussed in fighting terms.[27]

These statements are irrelevant to the point made by Atkinson, and also to Hammond's summation that Rice's "enthusiasm for justice and freedom overcomes him and prevents him from giving it effective expression."[28] As an answer, however, to the reviews by Anderson, Brown, and Garland, they do seem proper; for,

[27] Rice, New York *Times,* September 23, 1934.
[28] Hammond, New York *Herald-Tribune,* September 13, 1934.

not content to call into question the stridency of *Judgment Day,* they chose to employ ridicule, an unfair weapon to use in view of the play's significant purpose.

Following close upon *Judgment Day,* Rice's next offering, *Between Two Worlds,* found an even more unfavorable press. The play must have been a source of embarrassment to the critics and of despair to the playwright. Those who had clamored against the violence of *We the People* and *Judgment* Day, now felt obliged to charge Rice with being too calm and even-handed. Rice must have said to himself: "I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't."

Still, the critics were just in their opinions of *Between Two Worlds.* As they pointed out, it was difficult to distinguish a purpose in all the desultory shipboard conversations. There was really no one in the plot—the communist, the Junior League girl, the Russian countess, the advertising man, the poet—with whom one could sympathize, and the play itself was dull.

On November 1, 1934, about two weeks after the opening of *Between Two Worlds,* Rice published an article in the *Times* blasting the critics, and announcing his retirement from the commercial theatre. There was little place on Broadway, he declared, for drama that did not make concessions to economic interests, among which he reckoned the tastes and influence of the critics.

Fortunately, his retirement was not permanent. He returned to the theatre four years later, at a time when American dramatists were beginning to see the need of defending democracy. It is to Rice's credit that his *American Landscape,* produced in December 1938, is one of the first in a distinguished list of patriotic plays that includes Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois,* Kaufman and Hart's *American Way,* Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine,* Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night,* Anderson's *Key Largo,* and Boothe's *Margin for Error.*

In my opinion, none of Rice's plays received a more accurate press than *American Landscape.* The score was two favorable reviews, and eight less favorable than unfavorable. The play had a triple theme: the importance of preserving sound American traditions, the need for more understanding between capital and labor, and the insidious danger of an encroaching Fifth Column; and the scheme of the play accommodated all these ideas without

any jostling. Moreover, Rice's device of using ghosts from America's past was well conceived.

Nevertheless, although well mounted and well acted, *American Landscape* was a disappointment. One had no sense of inner compulsion, of the characters behaving other than automatons, speaking set speeches and achieving the goals of the play simply because these goals had been set up in advance by the author.

And, except for two critics, who, I think, looked more at the intention than the execution, this was the burden of the reviews of December 5, 1938:

Atkinson: But the play has such sprawling form that toward the end the thoughts became isolated speeches rather than passionate utterances out of the heart of the theme. . . . In philosophy it ranks high. In drama it is diffuse. Mr. Rice's pen usually has a sharper cutting edge.

Watts: The trouble with the play is that it never seems to strike deeply into the all-important matters that it is studying, that it never gives the impression of being properly thoughtful in the presentation of its ideas or sufficiently dramatic in the quality of its story telling.

Coleman: However, "American Landscape" too often takes on the aspects of a pageant and a debate and forsakes drama.

Brown: Obviously his attempt is a worthy one. But no less obviously there stands between him and the successful saying of what he (and all the rest of us) hoped he would get said that obstruction which Mr. Rice himself once described as "the imposing and fearsome machinery of the theatre."

Anderson: We agree with the play, but only because it says obvious things. A critic is a knave to accept a propaganda play merely because he happens to agree with its point of view.

Even Rice, in an "apologia" for his life in the *Times* on December 25, 1938, did not defend *American Landscape* as drama, but as truths that were important for American citizens to affirm, and re-affirm. Sound as his contention probably was, those American citizens who were also theatregoers did not respond, and the play closed after 43 performances. In this instance, the public seems to have followed the advice of the critics. Whether that advice was as merciful as it might have been in view of the playwright's intentions, it was at least just in view of his performance.

In many ways, these four plays are, I think, at the heart of any discussion of the relations of the playwright and the press, in so far as Rice is taken as the example. In content and intent they are wholly characteristic of the serious, social-minded dramatist that Rice at his best has been. By absolute standards they are neither so good nor so bad as to make the task of the reviewer the easy one of quick praise or condemnation. They are borderline plays and, for that reason, especially sensitive to the judgment of the press.

In retrospect, it appears that the critics were just in their estimates of *Between Two Worlds* and *American Landscape,* and that the best interests of the American theatre and the public were served by the composite negative reports. Of Rice's intention, they spoke highly; of his execution, they spoke truthfully.

On *Judgment Day* and *We the People* the record is by no means so good. As a whole, the reviewers were not painstaking and thoughtful. The theatre was considered more in its function as entertainment than as a place for significant comment on national and international problems, and the general estimate of the two plays was evidently clouded by prejudice. In fact, some of the reviewers seem to have waged a continual fight against Rice—determined to justify their views even at the cost of an independent appraisal of each new play as it appeared.

What, then, is to be learned from the relations of Elmer Rice with the press? Simply this: that reviewers individually have good, bad, and indifferent records with regard to the total output of a single dramatist; that—and this is what counts as far as the success or failure of a play goes—while they pick out unerringly and demolish effectively the poor plays and praise unanimously only the most outstanding, they disagree sufficiently on other good plays to hurt them at the box office; that they are too easily impressed by plays of mere entertainment; and, finally, that they are inclined to damn with faint praise plays of excellent intentions but moderate accomplishments.

Atkinson has said that the first responsibility of the critic is to the public, and certainly every dispassionate observer would agree that the critic cannot and should not concern himself with the effect that his review may have upon the purses of the play-

wright, producer, and the players. But in the record here offered, has not the greatest sufferer been the public?

The question has been asked: if the theatregoer knows at the final curtain whether he likes or dislikes the play, why cannot the reviewer decide with equal rapidity? The drama critic, however, is no mere theatregoer, hired to write down his views. He is, or should be, a trained specialist, and his expressed opinion of a play should be based on firmer grounds than mere impressionism. It should be based on a knowledge of the whole work of the author; on an awareness of the place of the particular play under review in the whole work, and in the theatre and the time the dramatist is writing for; and by the standards of taste the public may not have but should be acquiring. With an honorable exception here and there, this conception of play reviewing has not been observed by the New York press. The consequences to the theatre and to the public have been impoverishment: although the public has frequently been saved from the bad, it has often not been given a proper introduction to the good.

THE MAKING OF A GREAT ACTOR— WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY

by

ALAN DOWNER

The older critics often talk about schools of acting—the Betterton school, the Garrick school, the Kemble school—as if actors did over their styles every decade or so to suit the reigning fashion. There is a certain amount of truth in this, of course, for the actor is the abstract of his time; but there are also certain fundamental or basic ways of doing things on the stage which all actors share, the actor's symbols, and it is in the *quality* of these symbols (as of the poet's images) that the difference between "schools" may be found. It would seem more practical to divide actors into two classes: Those who act by inspiration and those who act, as Hazlitt said, by the book of arithmetic.

The inspired performer is, when he is inspired, a transcendent being, sweeping the audience out of their mundane selves, illuminating the text of Shakespeare and other dramatists by flashes of lightning, instinctively taking possession of the character until his fellows are frightened and spectators faint from excitement. The inspired performer can step from the tavern around the corner into the palace at Elsinore, can, as Joe Jefferson testified, break off a comic song in the wings to rush on for a serious scene and then return to pick up the song where he left off. In the higher reaches of the profession the inspired performer might be called a genius; in the lower, a personality or a matinee idol.

It is evident at a glance that William Charles Macready (1793-1873) does not belong to either class. His diary is a record of constant study and practice, and he was himself only too conscious that he was no matinee idol. Contrary to the behavior of the usual personality, he was deeply offended if anyone off stage recognized him as an actor. Rather, he acted, although the statement is somewhat too simple, by the book of

arithmetic. His professional life was a continuous rehearsal even to his last performance—an effort to learn, to understand, and to perfect the symbols of his art. Whatever hackneyed mechanism "the book of arithmetic" may suggest among lesser actors, on the intellectual level of Macready it implies the critical and analytical method which is probably nearer to the contribution required of all the participants in the production of a play than the inspiration of an Edmund Kean or the personality of a Fanny Kemble.

Macready's training began under his father, who was, according to Wemyss, an excellent master: "I learned more," declares the American actor and manager, "during my short stay in his company, of the practical side of my profession, than any two years of past experience had afforded me. He was a strict disciplinarian—one of the best instructors of acting I ever met."[1] Macready said many years later that his father's ideas of acting were somewhat old-fashioned, as evidenced by his admiration for such actors as John Henderson, who inherited the mantle of Garrick.

In their own time, the style of Henderson and John Philip Kemble was considered natural. It is the customary difficulty in studying the history of acting that every great actor is described as natural by those contemporary critics who subscribe to the same principles. The definition of nature varies as widely on the stage as it does in the criticism of poetry. Henderson, whom Macready came to think of as "stagey," was felt to be almost too natural by Boaden; in contrast to the reading of the other followers of Garrick, Henderson's declamation employed undertones and was less "upon the level."[2] Yet Macready's description of him and of Kemble suggests a rigid formality which ill suits Boaden's term of unheroic and calls to mind Hazlitt's description of Kemble as "an icicle upon the bust of tragedy."[3]

Macready saw Kemble in 1817, the last season of his career,

[1] F. C. Wemyss, *Twenty-Six Years of the Life of an Actor and Manager* (New York 1847), p. 52.

[2] James Boaden, *Mrs. Sarah Siddons* (London n.d.), I, 154.

[3] It should be pointed out that these much quoted words were written by Hazlitt in connection with Kemble's performance of Sir Giles Overreach, a part to which he was ill-suited (see *The Examiner*, May 5, 1816). In the *London Magazine* for August 1820. Hazlitt had this to say of Kemble and Macready: "At present, the female throne in tragedy is vacant; and of the men . . . , Mr. Macready is the only one who draws houses, or who finds admirers. He shines most, however, in the pathos of domestic life; and we still want to see tragedy 'turretted, crowned, and crested . . . ,' stooping from the skies (not raised from the earth) as it did in the person of John Kemble."—Editor.

when he was, according to theatrical custom, playing the round of his favorite parts; and his performances were "subjects of study" to the young actor. But Kemble's monotonous declamation, his labored articulation, was a considerable disappointment to Macready. For the first time, perhaps, Macready realized that the "school" of Kemble was outmoded; that it no longer suited the temper of the times. At Drury Lane, in the same season, the newly risen star of Edmund Kean was at its brightest. He too was a study, and a more profitable one. As Sir Edmund Mortimer in *The Iron Chest,* his reading was "flowing, discriminating, and most impressive," his pantomime and pauses, full of meaning. His transitions—the frenzy of the recital of his crime climaxed at "I stabbed him to the heart!" followed by a pause as if the vision suddenly presented itself to him, a lowering of the voice, a slowing of the tempo, "And my oppressor rolled lifeless at my foot"—were a significant contrast to the measured utterance of Kemble, rising and falling in waves. And, in the audience, Macready had a chance to compare the effect of the two styles on the spectators. Whereas Kemble left them politely interested, Kean caused something approaching hysteria.[4]

But to some extent the force of circumstance rather than intellectual analysis determined Macready's early style. There was first his father's predilection for Henderson and Kemble; there was his success in the provinces in the stilted old tragedies, his father's favorites; and there was his introduction to London in 1816 in the pseudo-classic, *The Distressed Mother,* a translation by Ambrose Phillips of Racine's *Andromaque,* which, according to Hazlitt, "produced a great effect of *ennui* on the audience." The new player, however, was generously received and his good points were noted down by Hazlitt, who spoke particularly of the power, harmony, and modulation of his voice: "he declaims better than any body we have lately heard."[5] Modulation and declamation suggest that the style was suited to the play, rhetorical for rhetorical.

In Macready's early struggles for attention this quality of voice seems to have been his chief weapon. A review of Reynold's *The Illustrious Traveller* claimed that its fine melancholy depth and richness were unique on the London stage. Hazlitt felt

[4] *Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from His Letters and Diaries,* edited by Sir Frederick Pollock (London 1875), I, 134-137.
[5] *The Examiner,* September 22, 1816.

that it was not sweeter than Kean's, but was yet "the finest and most heroical on the stage." This statement, made three years after *The Distressed Mother,* indicates that a certain change or development had been going on in the reading of the young actor. Hazlitt also said at the time that

> the temptation which all such characters [he was playing Coriolanus] hold out to be declamatory, did not seduce him back, generally speaking, to that former contentedness of monotonous elocution . . . that mere melodious declamation, which he used to deal out, sentence after sentence, like a machine turning ivory balls.

The stylistic differences between Ambrose Phillips and William Shakespeare might account for some of the change. Hazlitt, however, perceived something more significant:

> He is also apt to be too sudden and theatrical in his contrasts, from a loud utterance to a low one; nor must it be concealed that his finest touch of all, where he literally casts in *Aufidius's* teeth the scornful word Boy! was toned and gestured too obviously, however unintentionally, in the manner of Mr. Kean.[6]

Macready would doubtless have received this latter suggestion with scorn, but it is certainly true that the first piece of Kean's business that he records in his *Reminiscences*—Richard the Third staring at his withered arm and then beating it back in disgust—business which he first observed in provincial days, he inserted in his own performance.[7]

Of Macready's Coriolanus, *The Athenaeum* said that although it was energetic and powerful, "It is, as it appears to us, *throughout* a substitution of towering rage for dignified contempt; he gives way to sheer passion until it almost chokes his utterance."[8] And his wild and terrific bursts of passion in such varying plays as *The Steward* and *The Winter's Tale* were clearly a part of his old style. It was with reference to this violence that the tragedian, Charles Young, warned him: "Young gentleman, you expend a degree of power unnecessarily; half the energy and fire that you employ would be more than sufficient."[9]

The violence of his action was Macready's most frequently noted fault. Considered historically, it seems as if, sensing that the Augustan style of the late eighteenth-century actors no

[6] *Ibid.,* December 5, 1819.
[7] *Reminiscences,* I, 95.
[8] Undated clipping from *The Athenaeum;* in the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[9] *Reminiscences,* I, 84.

longer had power to move an audience, he were trying to find a substitute in sheer fury. And there were other faults, more or less subsidiary to this major one. *The Examiner* declared that his Leontes,

> . . . exhibited examples of his own peculiar energy, with some fine studies of attitude and deportment; but they were accompanied with few of the particular dips and plunges into the right place,—like an adventurous miner,—which so conspicuously distinguish Kean.[10]

Another critic felt that he lacked the imaginative force to "sustain him in the ideal and the grand," though complimenting him on having to a considerable degree reformed the habit of reiteration.[11]

Of this last charge, reiteration, there is little evidence, though there can be no doubt that his early style inclined to redundancy. It is a tendency of all young actors, who must always be "doing something" or they are not acting, to suit the action to the word somewhat too conscientiously; Macready confesses to the fault. Other charges against him were an exaggeration of intensity and a lack of variation in reading; he was, in Hazlitt's opinion, Drydenish or Romanesque rather than Shakespearean. Drydenish is to be heroic in the sense of the heroic play, full of the bombast and rant so ridiculed in Villiers' *The Rehearsal.* Romanesque refers to sustained declamation, in the style of Kemble's Cato. There was an additional fault about which nothing could be done, but of which a great deal was made—his face.

That Macready became fully aware of his shortcomings as an actor for a society in the throes of the Romantic Revival is apparent from the striking dissimilarity between the style just described and the style usually associated with his name. Owing in part to the constant prodding of the newspapers, to which he was normally sensitive, in part to the advice of fellow actors like Young and Sarah Siddons, but mainly to his application to his profession and observation of its leaders, he formed and perfected a style wholly his own and completely attuned to the spirit of the early Victorian era whose eminent tragedian he was to be. To be sure, on occasion, he slipped back into his old habits through fatigue, or through being thrown off by some

[10] *The Examiner,* November 9, 1823.
[11] Unidentified clipping, dated November 3, 1823; in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

gaucherie of his co-workers. His diary gives a number of instances:

January 23, 1833. . . .a lack of energy of heartedness, with more than enough of muscular exertion, and all attempts at effect in expression overclouded by the perpetual scowl that contracted and darkened my countenance; a bad performance.

May 10, 1834. From the frequent and almost uninterrupted repetition of this play [*Sardanapalus*] I feel myself lapsing into my old habitual sin of striving for effect by dint of muscular exertion, and not restraining my body, while my face and voice alone are allowed to act.

February 20, 1837. Was resolved to make some effort to act William Tell (which I detest) in a manly natural, and impressive manner, carefully avoiding the tendency to falsetto tone, to weakness of character, or melodramatic action and deportment.[12]

Or, from the other side of the footlights, *The Spectator* found him reading Werner in

. . . a series of level tones, rising abruptly one above the other, like the flights of terraces in Mr. Martin's architectural visions, rather than the undulating sublimity of nature. They want inflection; and in the earnestness of his passion they rise with increasing rapidity till they are lost in a scream of rage.[13]

Macready's efforts to establish his new style had been systematic and studied. If he occasionally slipped, the style was none the less his own, and no less genuinely a part of the man and of his times. In 1856, after his retirement, he wrote to Lady Pollock:

. . . there was a time when my action was redundant—when I was taught to attempt to imitate in gesture the action I might be relating, or to figure out some idea of the images of my speech. How was I made sensible of this offense against good taste? I very soon had misgivings suggested by my own observations of actual life. These became confirmed by marking how sparingly, and therefore how effectively, Mrs. Siddons had recourse to gesticulation. In the beginning of one of the chapters of "Peregrine Pickle" is the description of an actor (who must have been Quin) in Zanga, elaborately accompanying by gesture the narration of Alonzo's emotions on discovering and reading a letter: the absurdity is so apparent that I could not be blind to it, and applied the criticism to myself in various situations, which might have tempted me to something like the same extravagance. A line in the opening of one of the Cantos of Dante—I do not immediately remember it—made a deep impression on me in suggesting to me the dignity of repose; and so a

[12] *Reminiscences*, I. 352, 418; II, 60, 61.
[13] *The Spectator*, December 18, 1830.

theory became gradually formed in my mind, which was practically demonstrated to me to be a correct one, when I saw Talma act, whose every movement was a subject for the sculptor's or the painter's study. Well, as my opinions were thus undergoing a transition, my practice moved in the same direction, and I adopted all the modes I could to acquire the power of exciting myself into the wildest emotions of passion, coercing my limbs to perfect stillness. I would lie down on the floor, or stand straight against a wall, or get my arms within a bandage, and, so pinioned, or confined, repeat the most violent passages of Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, or whatever would require most energy and emotion. I would speak the most passionate bursts of rage under the supposed constraint of *whispering them* in the ear of him or her to whom they were addressed, thus keeping both voice and gesture in subjection to the real impulse of the feeling. . . . I was obliged also to have frequent recourse to the looking-glass, and had two or three large ones in my room to reflect to myself each view of the posture I might have fallen into, besides being under the necessity of acting the passion close to a glass to restrain the tendency to exaggerate its expression—which was the most difficult of all—to repress the ready frown, and keep the features, perhaps I should say the muscles of my face, undisturbed, whilst intense passion should speak from the eyes alone.[14]

A somewhat negative indication of Macready's theory of acting may be found in his criticism of his contemporaries—not his complaints about those who surrounded him on the stage, which are not so much criticisms as crotchets, but his comments from a seat in the auditorium. The early chapters of his *Reminiscences* contain frequent references to actors of the "stagey" school, such as his comments on Kemble. Later, his criticisms continue to be directed against those performers who seem to him artificial: William Farren, who, in addition to being a thorn in his managerial flesh, was "harsh as a crabstick . . . a man speaking points *at* an audience all through the play"; actors of German opera, "the same unnatural gesticulation and redundant holding up of arms and beating of breasts," common to all opera-acting, and, rather surprisingly, to Rachel.[15]

French acting in general he did not like. It was conventional, all mannerism; "it resembles a figure in relief, no background, and almost all in single figures, scarcely any grouping, no grand composition: this sort of effort may be good for the artist, but not for the illustration of a play."[16] That is, the performances

[14] *Reminiscences*, II, 441-442.
[15] *The Diaries of William Charles Macready*, edited by William Toynbee (London 1912), I, 29, 107.
[16] *Reminiscences*, II, 181, 256.

lacked any unifying tendency. Rachel, whom Lewes put with Kean on a height he denied to Macready, had for him insufficient variety, no tenderness and grandeur. As a result her passionate scenes were deficient in relief and often degenerated into scolding; she was "too cat-like in the spitting out of her reproaches."[17]

Macready reserved his admiration for Fanny Stirling, then rising into prominence as a supremely natural actress. He found her "freshness and truth of tone" unequalled on the stage.[18] And among the opera stars he chose to praise Mme. Wilhelmina Schroeder-Devrient, who alone was able to abandon herself to her feelings—to identify herself with her character—in a way that he could genuinely approve; she was, he said, as "tender, animated, passionate and enthusiastic as acting in an opera could be.[19] His ideal actor, then, was one who avoids violence, redundancy, artificiality, and formalism, and aims at variety, naturalness, and self-abandonment. It is no coincidence that these faults were Macready's own early faults, these virtues the goals towards which he strove.

Against the first of the faults, violence, the mere splitting of the ears, he had been warned by Young. It was some years before he could break himself of the habit, presumably by the method outlined in his letter to Lady Pollock. The roles, nearly all melodramatic villains, to which he fell heir in his first London seasons, and which he did superbly, were not conducive to the imitation of the modesty of nature. Yet it was in one of these—perhaps because of distaste for the part in which he had been cast—that he experimented with repressed force, or underplaying. The year was 1818; the play, Monk Lewis's *Adelgitha;* and the reasoning which lay behind his new approach, somewhat peculiar: "The truth had become manifest to me, that, as passion is weakness, the real sense of power is best expressed by a collected and calm demeanour."[20]

His explanations of some of his later characterizations are clearer. As Hotspur, keeping vehemence and effort out of passion was "everything for nature," and as Coriolanus he was careful to subdue his voice to awaken the audience by passion rather than lungs. "I fail," he noted, "when I allow my tongue

[17] *Ibid.*, II, 283; *cf.* II, 180, 291.
[18] *Diaries*, II, 114.
[19] *Reminiscences*, I, 372.
[20] *Ibid.*, I, 174.

and action to anticipate my thought."[21] The success of this device was evident to his audiences, if not to Bernard Shaw's father who compared Macready's Coriolanus to a mad bull. *The Theatrical Times,* crediting his "dullness" to his fear of appearing melodramatic, found nonetheless "intensity beneath the surface of all he does."[22] Controlled passion was not in Macready's nature, as his diaries amply testify, and he recognized the necessity of constantly striving to maintain whatever measure of success he achieved. As late as 1840, he was writing to George Wightwick:

I think it cannot be wrong to endeavour to preserve in my acting an equal, or to supply a greater, quantity of passion, with less of exaggerated attitude and overstrained expression—*i.e.* distortion of countenance—a more sustained deportment with less quantity of voice—and to avoid the melodramatic practices you speak of, which in Kean (*the* Kean) himself were blots upon the bright genius of a superlatively great actor, and which were never—*never*—to be detected in Mrs. Siddons, in Talma, in Kemble, or in Miss O'Neill.[23]

In the training of his protégés, like Helena Faucit, he was careful to insist upon the effect of control,[24] and his advice to John Coleman was, "Confine your excitement to your mind, and leave your muscles to take care of themselves!"[25] The effect of this subdued acting is best shown in a contrast between the death of Beverley in *The Gamester* as acted by Charles Kemble and by Macready. *The Times* described Kemble as "screaming like a schoolboy under the birch or the dentist," but found most impressive Macready's "apathy to the stirring events that press before him, after he has taken the poison—the cold inexpressive glare of his eye, the imbecility with which he allowed his words to fall from his lips."[26]

An adjunct of this suppression, which was "everything for nature," was a device still known to actors by the name of the "Macready pause." In part, this was a slowing down of the reading of speeches to obtain the effect of a man thinking, particularly in the soliloquies, where Macready was often praised for making one thought seem the natural consequence of its

[21] *Ibid.,* I, 397, 414.
[22] *The Theatrical Times,* I (1846), 212.
[23] J. A. Hammerton, *The Actor's Art* (London 1897), pp. 123-124.
[24] *Diaries,* II, 37.
[25] John Coleman, *Fifty Years of an Actor's Life* (New York and London 1904), II, 507.
[26] *The Spectator,* III (1830), 65; London *Times,* January 13, 1842.

predecessor, and as often blamed for what appeared to the critics eccentric deviations from the punctuation of the received text. In larger part, however, the Macready pause was a deliberate halting to allow a climactic effect to register on the audience, a finishing off, as he put it, of each burst of passion, a discrimination made palpable to and impressed on an audience. A performance of Lear pleased him because "I acted really well—and felt the audience were under my sway—I threw nothing away—took time and yet gave force to all I had to do."[27]

The pausing led occasionally to accusations of sententiousness, *The Examiner* remarking that he played Joseph Surface like an undertaker.[28] At Bristol he was driven almost to homicide by a prompter who persisted in throwing him a cue whenever he paused for effect. But the pause became one of the most distinctive aspects of his style, one well suited both to the physical conditions of the theatres in which he had to play and to the interpretation which his audiences were disposed to put on the word natural. "Time, time and discrimination," he wrote, "but time ensures discrimination."[29]

By discrimination Macready appears to mean the thoughtful relationship of succeeding ideas or actions as opposed to rant, to the mouthing of the town crier. Hazlitt had noted that Macready showed signs of escaping from the Kemble school of declamation even on his first appearance: "The fine suppressed tone in which he assented to *Pyrrhus's* command to convey the message to *Hermione* was a test of his variety of power and brought down repeated acclamations from the house."[30] Hazlitt was measuring the debutant by his favorite standard of excellence, the radically new style of Edmund Kean, with its rapid transitions of voice and manner. Oxberry in 1826 dates the change in Macready's manner of reading as "within the last four years,"[31] suggesting that several years of observation of Kean and his success with an audience had taught Macready the secret of the little man's strength. Macready, however, turned Kean's methods to his own purposes, to make clear the meaning of the poet. As Lewes declares,

[27] *Reminiscences*, I, 366, 368, 420.
[28] *The Examiner*, January 9, 1831.
[29] *Diaries*, I, 74.
[30] *The Examiner*, September 22, 1816.
[31] William Oxberry, *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography* (London 1827), V, 49.

. . . his intelligence always made him follow the winding meanings through the involutions of the verse, and never allowed you to feel, as you feel in the declamation of Charles Kean and many other actors, that he was speaking words which he did not thoroughly understand.[32]

The contrasts which he was able to produce were sometimes very striking, and sometimes merely theatrical. Certainly an illumination of the author's text was his transition in the closet scene of *Hamlet* upon the appearance of his father's ghost, "where he broke from the most intense and passionate indignation to the lost and bewildered air, and with a voice of unearthly horror and tones of strange awe, tremblingly addressed the spirit."[33] The reasoning behind the Hamlet transition is clear. To some of his others there were objections. Of Macready's Romont in *The Fatal Dowry,* a critic complained, with false humility:

We cannot comprehend the meaning of some of his extraordinary sinkings and transitions of voice. They may be very fine and very sublime; but we confess that the refinements are much too sublimated for the grosser atmosphere of our "groundling" taste.[34]

It may be that the critic was looking for more than Macready intended, since he seems at times to have used the transition simply as an artistic device to give "relish and effect." He himself censured Mrs. Sharp's Constance in *King John* as being too much on a level, lacking contrast and variety to make it vivid.[35]

To a good many spectators, however, these transitions were mere mannerism, as artificial as the school which he was superseding. He would, as far as they could see, suddenly break off "while the pitch of declamation is still vibrating on the ear," and fall into the "deepest sub-colloquial whisper."[36] As Virginius in Sheridan Knowles' play, he was acclaimed at first for just such use of aposiopesis, as the *Drama Pocket Book* chose to call it, but when Knowles himself came out in the play, Macready's transitions appeared too abrupt:

The *Virginius* of MACREADY was dignified by its classic elegance; the *Virginius* of KNOWLES was animated by reality of feeling, and grand by virtue of its natural energy. In the early scenes with *Virginia,* MACREADY

[32] G. H. Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (New York 1878), p. 40.
[33] *New Monthly Magazine,* July 1821.
[34] Unidentified clipping, dated 1825; in the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[35] *Diaries,* I, 296.
[36] *The Literary Gazette,* January 15, 1831, commenting on Macready's Werner.

seemed to stoop condescendingly from his stately elevation, and almost to surprise his daughter as well as the audience by his familiar air and amiable manner. KNOWLES, on the contrary, was at home with his child: the interest he took in her studies was habitual with him: his manner, look, and tone, were kind, earnest, and genial, like those of a father.[37]

When the transition was appropriate, and the meaning apparent, as in the *Hamlet* scene, Macready was able to make a point far superior to the claptrappy points of his predecessors. In his interpretation of King John, such a contrast was at the very center of his conception of the character and the production as a whole.

The transition from the chivalric hero to the criminal was artfully managed, both by the actor and the manager. A gloom, which came in sudden contrast to the previous bustle of the drama, seemed to usher in the conversation between John and Hubert. A change had come over the play. It was a foreboding look that John cast on Arthur, the tongue faltered as the horrible mission was intrusted to Hubert. For a moment the countenance of the king beamed as he said "Good Hubert," but the gloom returned when he said "Throw thine eye on yonder boy." That he did not look Hubert in the face when he pronounced "death" was a fine conception.[38]

If, as most of the contemporary critics believed, Macready had adopted the sudden vocal change from Kean in the beginning, he ended by enlarging it from a personal device almost to a theory of staging, as Kean could never have done. Indeed, according to Marston, it became second nature to him and was carried over into his everyday conversation.[39]

These transitions in voice contributed largely to what is probably Macready's most original contribution to the technique of acting. His colloquialisms, or "touches of nature," were inseparable from the style and the man, and are indeed the most Victorian aspect of his art. By one critic they were selected as the keystone of his performance:

If we say that *naturalness* (an ugly but a useful word) is at the basis of all Mr. Macready's impersonations, we do not conceive we shall widely err. To seize on an emotion, to render it perfectly comprehensible to every capacity, to familiarize the creations of the dramatist to the spectator, rather than to hold them in a state of august elevation, seems to be his constant aim.[40]

[37] *The Spectator*, V (1832), 1185.
[38] London *Times*, October 25, 1842.
[39] Westland Marston, *Our Recent Actors* (London 1890), p. 21.
[40] *The Spectator*, XXII (1849), 966.

That this was, in fact, his aim is clear from various observations in his diaries: the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern scenes in a certain performance of *Hamlet* were earnest and real *"ad homines";* every line must be tested by "a natural standard"; a Macbeth was good because of a "manly colloquial tone"; a Lear bad because of a "crude, fictitious voice."[41]

As Virginius, his first great original part, the appearance of the colloquial was due to the nature of the playwright; Macready simply applied his new-found transitions to the part. This combination produced the touch of nature, which carried home "to the hearts and bosoms of men" the reality of the sufferings of the patrician in a way that Kemble as Cato had failed to do. This must have impressed on Macready the value of his discovery. As late as 1833 he is still at work on it: "I find the effect of that natural manly tone of dialogue, with which I must endeavor to improve the colloquial groundwork of my acting."[42] By then it was generally recognized by his critics, by his successors, and by Macready himself, that the domestication of acting was to be his principal contribution to the spirit of his time.[43]

A somewhat impressionable provincial critic in Birmingham, after waiting several days to regain his composure, began an enthusiastic review of a Macready performance in *Virginius* by pointing out that the two first acts were "A beautiful display of the sternness of the Patrician opposed to the feelings of the Father." An Irish critic, coming from a similar performance, accused him of mere dryness.[44] These extreme views show how novel was the path Macready was treading in anticipating what his own age would define as natural. The comment of the first critic also points to the most frequently noted of his domestic touches—the feelings of a father. As Prospero, he emphasized the moral dignity and goodness of the character, his fatherly care for Miranda.[45] *The Examiner* sums up his version of *Werner* by saying that "Byron makes us think only of the *theft of a purse;*

[41] *Diaries,* I, 207, 39, 4, 58.
[42] *Ibid.,* I, 5.
[43] "The tragedy of declamation perished during the reign of Mr. Macready. . . . His talent has shown, not in artificial declamation, but in grasping the most definite peculiarities of character" (*The Examiner,* February 8, 1851).
[44] *Theatrical Looker-On,* II (1823), 65-66; *Weekly Freeman's Journal,* February 11, 1826.
[45] *The Spectator,* XI (1838), 996. ". . . in the scenes with Miranda we saw only the fond father and the devoted daughter. The way in which he [Macready] speaks the fine passage beginning, 'The cloud-capped towers,' proves the superiority of a natural and simple delivery to the most pompous declamation; it fell on the ear as if Prospero had then first conceived the idea" (*The Athenaeum,* October 21, 1838).

Macready of the love of a father," and illustrates this with a description of the concluding scene:

. . . the greatest effect is produced, we think, where *Ulric* being charged with murder, the father twines round his arm in one last passionate embrace. We see that that affection is for life and death—in shame, in honour, and through the darkness of the grave. His latest effort is to falter forth a prayer of entreaty for *Ulric*—but his lips only move in silence, till a sudden crying sob breaks from them to proclaim that his heart was broken.[46]

Perhaps the last place that a contemporary audience had been led to expect the feelings of a father was in *King Lear*. Macready without sacrificing the monolithic grandeur of the primitive king, the magnificence of his rage, or the tempestuousness of his madness, nevertheless contrived to remind the audience that it was witnessing the sorrows of a person like themselves, to make them feel emotionally for Lear as they did for Joe Gargary or Little Nell. At the last lines in Lear's curse,

> How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child!

his voice so shifted from wrath to agony that the audience almost excused the malediction.[47] More pity was evoked at his hiding his face on the arm of Goneril as he said,

> I'll go with thee
> Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
> And thou art twice her love.

"A noble conception of shame," approved one critic.[48]

A second domestic touch, strongly marked in Macready's own character, to which he resorted whenever opportunity was given, was the Victorian's love of home. Few plays are more absurd in concept and execution than Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons*. It was equally absurd that Macready should play the inspiring young peasant, Claude Melnotte, a part totally unsuited to his physique or his age. Yet Lewes, an excellent critic of acting, states:

None of the young men whom I have seen play Claude Melnotte had the youthfulness of Macready in that part; you lost all sense of his

[46] *The Examiner*, November 19, 1837.
[47] Marston, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[48] Unidentified clipping dated January 25, 1838; in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

sixty years in the fervor and resilient buoyancy of his manner; and when he paced up and down before the footlights describing to the charming Pauline . . . the home where love should be, his voice, look, and bearing had an indescribable effect.[49]

To parental tenderness and love of home add kindness to the less fortunate, and you have surely a model of the Victorian gentleman as he saw himself. Macready's unfavorable critics could attack these touches of his as sentimental pathos, complain that the colloquial tone "jars sadly with the passion that the previous passages delivered with the intensest energy, have excited,"[50] or remind him that tragic heroes must be invested with artificial dignity to maintain the "*beau ideal* in poetry as in sculpture."[51] Like his transitions, his colloquialism became so much a part of him that it was difficult to distinguish, at times, when he was acting. During a rehearsal of *Virginius* in a country theatre, Macready gave his cue, "Do you wait for me to lead Virginia in, or will you do it?" and was somewhat startled to hear, instead of the reply Icilius should give, "Why really, my dear sir, I don't care; just as you do it in London."[52]

To increase the naturalness of his acting, Macready was careful to introduce as much familiarity of detail as was consistent with ideal presentation.[53] His personations were full of "Minute, fine, subtle touches," traced by *The Theatrical Journal* to the German influence which "has pervaded our literature since the commencement of the nineteenth century."[54] As an example of the general type of truth and sincerity which characterized his acting, it was pointed out that when he had to peruse or write a letter on the stage he did so, instead of performing some conventional symbol for the act, like mumbling or scribbling. To contribute further to the reality of the senate scene in *Othello,* he played with his back to the audience, and in directing a modern comedy he forced the actors to perform within the setting, behind the proscenium arch.[55]

The tone or quality of Macready's performance is somewhat more difficult to realize. One clue is to be found in the records of his study of a character. Most of his great roles in Shakespeare

[49] Lewes, *op. cit.,* p. 42.
[50] London *Times,* April 25, 1848.
[51] *The Spectator,* III (1830), 846.
[52] *The Theatrical Journal,* III (1842), 189.
[53] Lewes, *op. cit.,* p. 42.
[54] *The Theatrical Journal,* XIII (1852), 356.
[55] *The Examiner,* February 22, 1851; *Reminiscences,* II, 6, 154.

or his popular successes in original plays were first performed before the earliest entries in his published diaries. However, the role of Lear, in which Lady Pollock declares his performance was universally admired,[56] remained unattempted until 1833. We can therefore follow its development almost day by day. Lear must have been a constant study of Macready's in his early days, since he approached the character with much insight and originality. He criticizes Garrick, Kemble, and Kean for basing their interpretations on the infirmity which usually accompanies old age, and explains:

> Lear's was in truth a "lusty winter": his language never betrays imbecility of mind or body. He confers his kingdom indeed on "younger strengths"; but there is still sufficient invigorating him to allow him to ride, to hunt, to run wildly through the fury of the storm, to slay the ruffian who murdered his Cordelia, and to bear about her dead body in his arms. There is, moreover, a heartiness, and even jollity in his blither moments, no way akin to the helplessness of senility. Indeed the towering rage of thought with which his mind dilates, identifying the heavens themselves with his griefs, and the power of conceiving such vast imaginings, would seem incompatible with a tottering, trembling frame, and betoken rather one of "mighty bone and bold emprise," in the outward bearing of the grand old man.[57]

In 1820, Macready refused to undertake Lear "in obstinate despair of doing it justice."[58] But by 1833, just before his first period of management, he felt duty bound to attempt it. With typical caution he planned to try the part first in the provinces, during an engagement at Swansea.

He began his preparation sometime before July 12th, on which date he wrote in his diary: "Resumed my study of Lear, the difficulty of which does not yet diminish before my attempts." Lear was his constant companion, as the next entries testify: on the 18th he felt he was "advancing"; on the 25th he concentrated on the mad scenes. Two days later the weather was so hot that for two hours he "read Lear, with scarcely any practise," going over lines and business at home, rather than the more usual method of memorizing the lines in private and working out business during rehearsals.

[56] "In no character will he have left a more remarkable impression than in Lear. So full and commanding its mastery of emotion, so extraordinary its niceties of minute discrimination, that surely a picture more affecting, awful, or complete has not been witnessed on the stage" (*The Examiner*, November 9, 1850).

[57] *Reminiscences*, I, 207.

[58] *New Monthly Magazine*, May 1820.

On August 1st, driving to London, he tried to concentrate on the character; on the 12th, after tea, his wife held the book for him as he tested his memory of the words, thus discovering "how much I have yet to think of in the part, and how much to practise of that already thought upon, to arrive at any moderate degree of confidence." Private practice and contemplation continued daily. On the 20th he read Hazlitt on the character—"trash." A week later he attended his first stage rehearsal with the provincial company, a rehearsal that lasted five hours and ended in his being dissatisfied: "I have much labour to bestow upon it before I can hope to make it such a representation as I am ambitious of." Six weeks after the first entries, he went to the final rehearsal in which he was "very deficient, undecided, uncollected . . . unprepared." During the afternoon he lay down, as was his custom before playing, and tried to concentrate on the part. The upshot was failure.[59]

But one of Macready's favorite precepts was that in the perfecting of a role, an actor required the stimulation of an audience and must test his effects before one:

> The player, by dint of repeated efforts, must perfect himself in tones, attitudes, looks, of which he can only learn the effect under the nervous excitement of experimenting their power on the uncertain sympathies of an heterogeneous assembly.[60]

And so, at four o'clock the morning after the failure, on his way to take the coach, he perceived clearly his "want of directness, reality and truth. . . . Will not give it up."[61] By September 3rd, he felt that he had the key to the truth of the character. And all this was merely preparation.

In November, Alfred Bunn broached the subject of trying *Lear* in London. Macready "returned a vague answer." The following January, John Forster published an article on the play which, by overlooking the significance of an important line, roused Macready's interest. He thought of the advisability of attempting "the original Lear," so long banished by the Tate version. Looking over a copy that very day, he decided that it could be done.[62] By the end of April the whole cycle was repeated.

[59] *Diaries*, I, 49 ff.
[60] *Reminiscences*, I, 103-104.
[61] *Diaries*, I, 58.
[62] Transcript of an unpublished portion of Macready's diaries in the Harvard Theatre Collection. The entry is dated January 26, 1834.

On May 1st he began reading and thinking and, incidentally, doubting his ability. Two days later he decided to make the attempt, his doubt in himself having been overruled by the desire not to leave the character to the mercy of John Vandenhoff. "This weighed strongly" upon him, so strongly that the next day he spent eight hours working out a prompt book of his proposed restoration. The succeeding entries show the expected concentration, the expected misgivings. During a private rehearsal he tested too few of his ideas by experiment, "for which I must blame myself."

Stage rehearsals began on May 10th, two weeks before the performance. On the 12th, en route to London by coach, he "was luckily enabled by what I conceived a supercilious glance of one of my fellow travellers to give the whole of the journey to rumination upon Lear." As rehearsals progressed, his fears for his success increased, and he came to the performance as nervous as the first night he acted in London. The result, however, pleased him, though it was far from being what he had hoped. At four the next morning, he was reading the play in bed. The 25th he devoted to a careful study and correction of his errors and to making his effects more finished. On the next day he gave his second performance: "I acted really well . . . I *greatly* improved upon the preceding night."[63]

This record of conscientious study of character, and of devotion to his art, is almost unique in the early nineteenth-century theatre. Yet it is not unique in Macready's diaries. If it is the only account of the actual preparation of a major character, it is reinforced by his frequent self-criticisms and re-studying of old roles. He was always in earnest, he left nothing to chance, and worked endlessly to make palpable his understanding of his parts. Such industry could not help leaving its mark on his performance.

Nor, of course, could his own personality. The story of his life shows that Macready was just such an earnest, home-loving, devoted father as he delighted to portray on the stage. And the emotions of his private life were the tools of his public practice. In annotating Hugh Blair's *Lectures,* he came upon a reference to Quintilian's "setting before his own imagination what he calls 'Phantasiae' or 'Visiones,' strong pictures of the distresses or

[63] *Diaries,* I, 128 ff.

indignities which they had suffered whose cause he was to plead." In the margin Macready wrote: "In my own art, I have constantly resorted to this method in order to excite the different emotions of anger, pity, love, terror or anguish more strongly within myself."[64] Evidences of this practice, and its effects, abound. When Virginius gives his daughter to her betrothed, the image of his own wife and daughter came into his mind: "I spoke from my soul—the tears came from my heart."[65] He told Lady Pollock that he credited his successful playing of the scenes with the Ghost in *Hamlet* to his ability to recall a youthful dream in which he saw the ghost of a friend.[66] The tears and the emotion, recollected at will, were real tears and real emotion; Macready, to perform to his own satisfaction, must *be* the thing he represented.

For it was his often repeated belief that he had not acted well if he had not identified himself with his character. He is a remarkable example of the celebrated paradox that the actor must surrender himself to the part while remaining as far as possible a conscious artist. Dr. Johnson once declared that if an actor really believed himself to be Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged whenever he played the part. And one school of acting is frank in admitting that the whole of its art consists of staying outside the character and keeping a critical eye upon its every move. To this school, Macready did not, and did not profess to, belong.

His diaries are full of self-recrimination at having been so carried away in certain parts that he cursed audibly at his fictional opponents. As Virginius he came so close to choking the villain that on one occasion the actor playing the part added to his costume a velvet collar stuck full of tiny steel pins. When Macready questioned the appropriateness of the decoration, he was informed by the other: "Acting . . . is but feigning. I am not a gladiator or a wrestler, sir, and I set some value upon my windpipe."[67] But acting was more than feigning to Macready, or he believed that it was. "My acting tonight was coarse and crude," runs a typical entry, "no identification of myself with the scene."[68]

[64] Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London 1814), III, 167; copy in the Harvard Theatre Collection, heavily annotated by Macready for his son.
[65] *Diaries*, I, 63.
[66] Lady Juliet Pollock, *Macready as I Knew Him* (London 1885), p. 11.
[67] Marston, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.
[68] *Diaries*, I, 2-3.

It did not take much to destroy this identification: a cold audience ("if they do not abandon themselves to the actor's powers his magic becomes ineffectual"), a crepe beard which threatened to come loose, the imminent death of the King ("The state of suspense in which I was kept to the very moment of the beginning of the play so agitated me that when I went on the stage I was weaker than I often am when I finish a character"), the overcrowding of the pit, overhasty preparation, an unfamiliar costume ("in two important points it did not fit"), a crying child.[69]

He was forever finding justification for his principle in his models. Eliza O'Neill, who he felt was superior to Rachel, seemed to him a remarkable instance of self-abandonment on the stage: "She was an entirely modest woman; yet in acting with her I have been nearly smothered by her kisses."[70] And he liked to remember Mrs. Siddons' story of her nervousness when she first appeared before Queen Charlotte; she had managed to regain confidence by thinking how often she had played queens on the stage. This Macready took to be unconscious testimony to her identification of herself with the characters she played.[71] He quoted with approval a French playwright's eulogy of Talma: "He is not an actor: . . . each day he lives two hours of the life of the character he represents";[72] and whenever time permitted he followed Talma's practice of dressing early to possess himself more with the feeling of his character.[73] He declared:

> My long experience of the stage has convinced me of the necessity of keeping, on the day of exhibition, the mind as intent as possible on the subject of the actor's portraiture, even to the very moment of his entrance on the scene. He meditates himself, as it were, into the very thought and feeling of the person he is about to represent; enwrapt in the idea of the personage he assumes, he moves, and looks, and bears himself as the Roman or the Dane, and thus almost identifies himself with the creature of his imagination. It is not difficult to produce individual effects *ad libitum*, which will of course have their full estimation with the run of audiences; but I cannot conceive the representation of character without this preliminary preparation, or some such mental process.[74]

Joe Jefferson recalled that Macready began to assume his

[69] *Ibid.*, I, 400, 352, 348, 177, 112; II, 364, 419.
[70] Lady Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 29. Mrs. Macready was not pleased with this reminiscence.
[71] *Diaries*, I, 171.
[72] *"Il n'est point acteurs . . . il vit chaque jour pendant deux heures de la vie de personnage qu'il represente"* (*Reminiscences*, I, 274).
[73] *Ibid.*, I, 238.
[74] *Ibid.*, I, 115, 116.

character the moment he entered the theatre. He would remain in his dressing room, incommunicado, absorbing himself in his part, with his dresser posted outside the door to open it just before his cue.[75] "I cannot act Macbeth without *being Macbeth,*" he said, and he constantly echoed the anxious question of Schroeder: "Have I played the role well? Have I been the character?"[76]

Lady Pollock points out that to Macready the characters of a play, at least of a Shakespearean play, were real. His daughter Katie was once provoked to laughter by the solemn way in which he declared that a certain action of Antonio, in the *Merchant of Venice,* was very kind. "You seemed," she said, "to think he was alive." "And so he is to me," Macready replied, "So are they all. Who is alive if they are not?"[77] Nor, he maintained, could an actor of bad morals express by mere intellectual means the nobler emotions with which he had no sympathy. The corollary, that a good man could not act a villain, he met by pointing out that the good man, having conquered temptations, would of course know them as well as the morally corrupt. Judging from his own practice, he felt it necessary for the actor to have in his memory certain images, the recollection of which would enable him to produce the effects demanded by his role. By identification and recollection he could thus make his portrayal "the very thing, the reality."[78]

After a performance of *Hamlet,* his wife, who had been present, analyzed his faults and pointed out his "hurry and want of deliberate method."[79] This set him thinking about some of his predecessors, Kean, Miss O'Neill, Mrs. Siddons, and their ease in identifying themselves with their characters. He concluded that they owed much of this ability to their having been on the stage from childhood, as he had not. There was always in his mind the knowledge that he had been trained for a gentleman's profession, that the art which he practised was little respected by the upper levels of society; and it is significant that his associates were seldom admitted to the circle of his intimate friends. Perhaps his insistence upon losing himself in his character

[75] Joseph Jefferson, *Autobiography* (New York 1889), p. 41.
[76] "*Ai-je bien joué le rôle? Ai-je été le personnage?*" (*Reminiscences,* I, 66). *Cf. Diaries,* I, 282.
[77] Lady Pollock, *op. cit.,* p. 37.
[78] Marston, *op. cit.,* p. 49; *Reminiscences,* II, 2.
[79] *Diaries,* I, 62.

was to provide himself with a concealing cloak. This would explain his fright, not only upon the stage, but even upon seeing his name posted in the bills. It would also explain his fury when some unfortunate actor's slip upset the smooth mechanism of his performance and reminded him that he was but an impersonator of other men.

Certain other characteristics—or idiosyncrasies as some of his critics liked to call them—will help to complete the picture of the actor. From the very first, he was intensely conscious of the response of his audience. In his debut as Romeo he mechanically repeated the "variations" which he had rehearsed until he began to receive applause. This roused him to greater effort; he gained self-possession, entered into the spirit of the character, and experienced for the first time the elevation which comes from the successful interplay of emotions between actor and spectator. As soon as the curtain had fallen, he declared in his exhilaration that he would like to do the whole part over.[80] And in later years he often blamed his inability to drive himself to inspired heights almost as frequently upon the coldness of the audience as upon the inefficiency of his fellow actors.

These inspired heights were another characteristic of his acting. However he might talk about the effect of subdued power, he was no apostle of the repressed force that was to become the tenet of later nineteenth-century actors. At the end of *Werner,* he emitted a yell of agonized despair that made the audience shrink back in fright.[81] His reanimation of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* progressed to such a paroxysm of wonderment and joy, and struck such terror to the heart of Helena Faucit, who happened to be the Hermione, that Macready was forced to reassure her in an undertone.[82] "For the bad and stormy passions he has not, in our opinion, a superior upon the stage," stated *The Literary Gazette;* his glare was malignant, a "Ugolino look."[83]

Even his method of walking on the stage was his own. According to *The Theatrical Journal,* "He had a peculiar manner of lifting up his heels, which by some is considered very grace-

[80] *Reminiscences,* I, 41.
[81] "H. T.," *Memoir of Mr. Macready* (n.p., n.d.), p. 71.
[82] *Morning Herald,* October 12, 1835; Theodore Martin, *Helena Faucit* (Edinburgh 1900), p. 49.
[83] *Journal of Belles Lettres,* October 18, 1823.

ful," and young Vandenhoff speaks of its rolling effect.[84] But this walk was turned to the purposes of characterization. As Richelieu, he made manifest the rhythm of his thoughts by a gait "somewhat loose with age, but now quick and impulsive, now slow and suddenly arrested." In Lear, almost the only hint of age was some suggestion which he conveyed in his walk.[85] This was an unusual attention to the minutiae of characterization. Of his predecessors Kean was described as walking with a "one-two-hop-skip-to-the-right," and of his successors Irving crossed the stage as if running over a recently ploughed field.

Some idea of the energy Macready expended in one of his performances may be had from the frequent entries in his diaries concerning the stimulant he required to get through an evening. Though this was nothing stronger than wine, it was consumed in considerable quantities. By 1836 he was beginning to have some misgivings about the advisability of so indulging himself. He resolved to try temperance, but found it would not work:

> Misjudged in doing so; my nervousness, from want of due preparation, was so great as to mar my best efforts in the first scene, which, in spite of my best attempts at self possession, was hurried and characterless. Gulped down a draught of wine, and growing more steady from scene to scene, increased in power and effect.

Here was a return to the Greeks with a vengeance. Overindulgence during a performance of *Macbeth* four years later led him to swear loudly at Phelps. The advancing years brought back thoughts of temperance, though with misgiving: "I must be *most especially cautious* not to let the spirit of my acting evaporate with the diminution of alcohol!"[86]

Macready's violent moments differed from those of many of his contemporaries chiefly by being *prepared*. There was not in his acting sudden outbursts of power interspersed among quiet stretches of playing that could barely keep the attention of an audience. At every moment he tried to hold the entire character in view, to maintain that unity of design which he considered the great distinction of Mrs. Siddons.[87] When Charles Buller

[84] *The Theatrical Journal*, VI (1846), 330; George Vandenhoff, *Dramatic Reminiscences* (London 1860), p. 216.
[85] Marston, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 44.
[86] *Diaries*, I, 275, 423; II, 232-233.
[87] *Reminiscences*, I, 55.

suggested that his acting in the scene following the murder of Duncan was too strong, too full of terror, Macready was "not quite satisfied," although he usually listened eagerly to the criticism of his friends. Buller, it seems, had entered the theatre at just that point in the play and, therefore, had not seen the careful preparation and building towards the climactic moment.[88] Macready's attitude is evident in his own analysis of another performance of *Macbeth*:

> The general tone of the character was lofty, manly, or indeed as it should be, heroic, that of one living to command. The whole view of the character was constantly in sight: the grief, the care, the doubt was not that of a weak person, but of a strong mind and a strong man.[89]

This wholeness or unity of design was one of the most often praised aspects of Macready's acting. It was a feature which grew in attractiveness as the years passed. Early audiences were more pleased with the startling truths that Kean could reveal on occasion, although the *New Monthly Magazine* found Kean's Othello less noble, consistent, and picturesque than Macready's. Later audiences came to admire the perfect finish of his performances, to believe that no one but Macready can seize on "all those minute traits which circumstances impart to an individual—to form a correct outline, and to fill up with those diversities, brought into complete harmony."[90] When Macready first appeared on the London stage, an actor's success depended upon his original points, and audiences looked for them. By the time of his retirement, the modern system of acting, with its emphasis upon unity of design, was firmly established. If this was due in part to the spirit of the age, it was due in larger part to Macready's example and practice.[91]

General estimates of his style suggest that he was perhaps too intellectual for the taste of those of his contemporaries who were still under the spell of the early days of the Romantic Revival. *The Theatrical Times* called him more of a critic than an actor,[92] and *The Spectator* summed him up as natural and

[88] *Diaries*, I, 283.
[89] *Reminiscences*, II, 178.
[90] *New Monthly Magazine*, February 1, 1821.
[91] "According to our view, Mr. Macready was an intellectual actor—an artist who worked from a conception, at a time when others worked according to tradition, without any fresh impulse from their minds: and this, after all, was his great merit" (*The Spectator*, March 1, 1851).
[92] *The Theatrical Times*, I (1846), 140.

concrete rather than ideal and abstract.[93] He searched for character traits which the audience would recognize as true and, by the skillful use of pause, transition, and colloquialism, strove to convey the poet's meaning to the general. "The highest reach of the player's art," he once wrote, "is to fathom the depths of character, to trace its latent motives, to feel its finest quiverings of emotion, to comprehend the thoughts that are hidden under the words and thus possess oneself of the actual mind of the individual man."[94] On this point the Victorian actor met the Victorian critic on common ground; their aim was to search out and reveal the hidden thoughts and motivations that lie too deep for words, even for the words of Shakespeare.

[93] *The Spectator*, March 1, 1851.
[94] *Reminiscences*, II, 424.

SCENERY ON THE EARLY AMERICAN STAGE

by

CLIFFORD E. HAMAR

The story of scenery on the American stage from 1716 to 1830 is not as barren as one might suppose. Although revolvers, elevators, wagons, and other mechanical devices were yet unknown, and the box set had not been developed, ingenious designers, painters, and machinists achieved remarkable effects with their relatively crude equipment. In fact, from 1795 to 1825, the heyday of pantomimic spectacle, scenery was so elaborate in afterpieces and holiday extravaganzas that the actor sometimes found himself crowded entirely off the stage, the manager relying chiefly on the magic of paint and canvas to pack the house.

Good accounts of scenic accomplishment on the American stage of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have already appeared, and this article relies on them considerably. The purpose of this retelling of the story is to present, in later paragraphs, new data on productions in the Richmond and Washington Theatres—data that is significant because it gives a detailed picture of the staging of American plays between 1800 and 1820.

William Levingston, builder of the first playhouse in America at Williamsburg, Virginia, contracted with Charles and Mary Stagg on July 11, 1716, to "bring scenery and actors from England."[1] We do not know whether this scenery reached its destination, but the existence of this contract indicates that from the very beginning of our theatrical history scenery was considered essential to a prosperous enterprise. By 1750 every traveling company in the American colonies carried a green baize front curtain, several drop curtains, including a landscape and an interior, and, possibly, some paper screens for tormentors.[2] This

[1] Wesley Swanson, "Wings and Backdrops. The Story of American Stage Scenery from the Beginnings to 1875," *The Drama*, XVIII (October 1927 - January 1928), 5.
[2] *Ibid.*

was the standard equipment of English provincial players at that time.

Lewis Hallam introduced the first improvement into this scenically arid situation on his arrival in Virginia in 1752. When his brother William went bankrupt at Goodman's Fields Theatre, London, his creditors allowed him to keep the scenery, properties, and costumes, and it is likely that Lewis brought much of this equipment with him.[3] We may be sure that the scenery consisted mainly of the painted flats in general use in the English theatre at the middle of the eighteenth century. If there were any unusual flats, drops, or effects, they were perhaps intended for performances of the only pantomime in the American Company's repertoire for many years, *The Harlequin Collector, or, The Miller Deceived.*[4] The old flats from Goodman's Fields may have been the "painted scenery" used for Hallam's production of *The Tragedy of the Fair Penitent* in a temporary storehouse, Plumsted's Warehouse, at Philadelphia in 1754.[5] Later that year Hallam and his company went to Jamaica, where he died, and the old Goodman's Fields scenery may have perished there with him. When his company, under David Douglass, the "theatre builder," opened the New Theatre on Society Hill, Philadelphia, in 1759, it commissioned a certain William Williams to paint a new set of scenes for the then munificent sum of one hundred pounds.[6]

In 1766 Douglass purchased a set of scenes painted by Nicholas Dall, principal designer and scene painter at the Covent Garden Theatre.[7] This appears to have been the "new set of scenes" the American Company used in its production of *Othello* at New York in 1769.[8] The *Maryland Gazette* for September 1, 1772, mentions a performance by the same company of Hugh Kelley's comedy, *A Word to the Wise,* "with a new set of scenes, painted by Mr. Richards of London."[9] Swanson states that "The first scenery to be painted especially for America was imported

[3] O. S. Coad, "Stage and Players in Eighteenth Century America," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* XIX (April 1920), 1-23.
[4] William Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre* (New York 1832), p. 5.
[5] Swanson, *op. cit.,* p. 5.
[6] Thomas C. Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia 1933), p. 14.
[7] O. G. Sonneck, *Early Opera in America* (New York 1915), p. 33.
[8] G. C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York 1927–), I, 149.
[9] See complete quotation in Dunlap, *op. cit.,* p. 32. J. Richards, who succeeded Dall as principal scene painter at Covent Garden, was one of the distinguished artists of his day and secretary of the Royal Academy.

by Douglass. . . . for his playhouse at Annapolis, which opened in 1771."[10] Thus it appears that within six years Douglass imported from England at least two, and possibly three, complete sets of scenery.

For a production of Garrick's *Cymon* at the Johns Street Theatre, New York, on May 31, 1773, the management advertised a "new set of transparent scenes,"[11] and a few weeks earlier it had staged the Davenant-Dryden operatic version of *The Tempest* with "elegant" machinery and "scenic splendor."[12] Soon after the opening of the Douglass company at Charleston on December 24, 1773, the *New York Mercury* printed a dispatch from the southern city praising the new scenery, the "dresses, the musick, and what had a very pleasing effect, the disposition of the lights. . . ."[13]

Before the Revolution the better American theatres had little more than a set of the stock scenes like those to be found in England—a kitchen, parlor, wood, garden, and street. The back scenes, as well as the side wings, were probably mounted on flats rather than on backdrops.[14] Duerr states:

> Drop scenes, in use in England before 1767, were no doubt prevalent in America, but customarily the flats opened and closed as they had done since Davenant's day. The back-screen, or flats, were usually from twenty-four to twenty-nine feet wide, and about sixteen feet high.[15]

The stage directions printed in a number of early American plays are frequently cited as evidence that the wing-and-groove system was in common use in the pre-Revolutionary theatre. For example, Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia,* produced at the Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia, on April 24, 1767, contains the direction: "scene opens," implying that a double-flat, forming the back-wall, was pulled apart to disclose an inner scene.[16] Similar directions appear in Cocking's *Conquest of Canada,* performed at the Southwark on February 16, 1773, and in a play called *The Disappointment,* written for the same playhouse but never acted.[17] All of these references are to the one theatre.

[10] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[11] Odell, *op. cit.*, I, 165.
[12] *Ibid.*, I, 163.
[13] Sonneck, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
[14] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[15] Edwin Duerr, "Charles Ciceri and the Background of American Scene Design," *Theatre Arts Monthly,* XVI (1932), 983-990.
[16] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[17] Coad. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Whether the Johns Street Theatre in New York used the wing-and-groove system is not clear.[18] Very likely it did.

The backdrops in our early theatres may have been mounted at first on rollers, and later fastened tautly on frames to be flown out of the way.[19] In some houses the end of the act was indicated by the lowering of an act drop. Coad states that

> There is no reason to believe that a curtain was lowered at the shifts of scene within the act. If a change of the few properties used was necessary, or if a candle required snuffing, an attendant came on in full view of the audience and made the needed adjustments.[20]

Members of the British and American armies provided most of the scenery for plays given during the Revolution. For a performance of Fielding's *Tom Thumb* by the British at the "Theatre Royal" (the Johns Street) in 1777, Captain Oliver Delancy of the 17th Dragoons painted scenery that, according to the prologue, would not have disgraced "a theatre under the management of a Garrick." Dunlap, who saw several of these amateur performances in 1778, denied later that the scenery was "wretched," as some claimed. He remembered the "usual variety." Major André, the principal scene painter, was "expert at the brush," he said, and that Mr. Barrow, his assistant, a professional coach painter, "had taste and knowledge in the art of design."[21] After the occupation of Philadelphia, Captain Delancy and Major André painted scenery for plays at the Southwark. One drop scene by André was part of this theatre's stock until the fire of 1821, "hanging about the middle of the third entrance, as called in stage directions."[22] The theatrical efforts of the American Army at Valley Forge in 1778 were also embellished with scenery, however crude it may have been; in a letter from Valley Forge, written on May 14, 1778, William Bradford, commenting on a performance of Addison's *Cato*, observed that the scenery was "in good taste."[23]

A "dashing young Frenchman," Charles Busselot, created stage illusions for the younger Lewis Hallam at the Southwark in the 'eighties. A scene painter named Jacob Snyder is believed

[18] The often reprinted view of the interior of the Johns Street Theatre is, Dr. William Van Lennep informs me, a nineteenth-century falsification.
[19] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[20] Coad, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12.
[21] Dunlap, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-54.
[22] Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 35. See Duerr, *op. cit.*, p. 984, for an interesting description of this drop scene.
[23] A. H. Quinn, *A History of the American Drama. From the Beginnings to the Civil War* (2nd ed., New York 1944), p. 60.

to have traveled with the American Company for many years and he is known to have painted for it a set of scenes at Providence in 1782.[24] Aside from these isolated bits of information, the record of scenery on the American stage from the end of the Revolution to 1792 is almost blank.

The first flowering of American scenic art came at the close of the century, upon the importation of the pantomimic spectacle from London. John Rich had popularized pantomime in England with his Harlequinades at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre during the 'twenties. The form flourished throughout the eighteenth century and was near the height of its popularity in 1790, largely as the result of contributions to the technical arts of the theatre by Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, William Capon, and others. Up to this time, however, the resources of the American stage had not been adequate for the production of this costly and complicated kind of theatrical fare.

In the early 'nineties there were three theatrical areas in America. In the North, Hallam and Hodgkinson controlled New York and New England; in the center, Wignell and Reinagle operated a circuit that included Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington; in the South, the leading managers were John Sollee and Alexander Placide, the former controlling Richmond, New Bern, and Charleston.[25]

According to Swanson, pantomime attained its greatest popularity in America at Charleston in the early nineteenth century. While I shall present evidence that the Charleston Theatre never equalled the scenic achievements of the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, it presented some impressive productions, especially after it engaged Audin, a talented French and English trained artist, in 1792. A benefit performance at the Charleston Theatre in 1793 offered a "Target with substantial devices and a View of a Hop Ground and a Garden with Pavilions and Fairlop's Cottage," and in the same year its advertisement for a production of *The Tempest* listed

> . . . numerous scenic marvels, including a ship being dashed to pieces on a great chain of rocks "which both sides of the stage strikingly repre-

[24] Duerr, *op. cit.*, p. 983.

[25] John Bernard, *Retrospections of America* (New York 1887), p. 259. Dunlap, leading New York theatrical manager at the end of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth, entered partnership with Hodgkinson at the new Park Theatre, New York, in 1797.

sent," a "dreadful shower of fire pouring from the distempered elements" and a grand finale in which the spirit Ariel appeared in a chariot of clouds.

For a performance there, in 1795, of a pantomime, *Jupiter and Europa, or, The Jealousy of Juno,* Placide spent three months preparing scenes. The great attraction was "Olympus in all its lustre, and the Palace of the Sun," painted, it was alleged, from designs used by the Paris Opera. Another advertised feature was the "car of Juno drawn by peacocks."[26]

The *Apotheosis of Franklin,* a masque designed by Audin and brought out by Sollee in April 1796, has been described by Lawrence as "the first really pretentious scenic production in America."[27] Whether it was the first such production is a matter for debate, but it was undoubtedly pretentious. Quinn describes a piece called *Masque Americana, or, A New Tale of the Genii*—which may have been a revival of, or a sequel to, the *Apotheosis,* since it too eulogized Franklin—given at the Charleston Theatre on February 9, 1798. The second scene, painted on wings and a back-flat, represented the barren summit of a great rock in the Allegheny mountains. In a later scene, showing Franklin as a scientist, some of the allegorical characters were discovered on top of a triangular scaffolding; Fulmenifer, god of lightning, vanquished Typhon, god of darkness, with a shower of "electric fluid" from a prop "electrical rod."[28]

For this theatre's production of Colman's *The Surrender of Calais* in 1793, Audin reproduced a Hogarth drawing of the gate of Calais,[29] and its *Hamlet* in 1796 was advertised "with a new parlour scene executed in the most masterly manner by M. Audin. . . ."[30]

Transparencies were Audin's specialty. Belzon, the most distinguished of the Charleston painters after Audin, was known chiefly for his ability to paint a "sublime display of an erupting volcano."[31]

Some modest attempts at elaborateness of scene had been made in Philadelphia, at the Southwark Theatre, from 1790 to

[26] Swanson, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 42.
[27] W. J. Lawrence, "The Rise of Spectacle in America," *Theatre Magazine,* XXV (1917), 44.
[28] Quinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.
[29] Duerr, *op. cit.*, p. 984.
[30] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[31] Duerr, *op. cit.*, p. 984.

1794. On June 3, 1790, Hallam's company gave, between the play and a farce, a song with this scene:

> View of the Vessel riding the Sea, a Tempest, Thunder, Lightening [*sic*], and the different situations of the Ship from the first striking on the rock till her release from thence, as alluded to in the song.[32]

In 1794 Wignell and Reinagle opened the Chestnut Street Theatre "with splendid English scenery presented to Wignell in England the preceding year by Richards, Hodges and Rooker, artists of the first reputation in their day."[33] The productions at the Chestnut immediately set a standard for taste and for excellence in mounting which had never before been attained in America. Although the sets brought from England still served for many different plays, the managers used their own well-equipped shop and expert scene painters to prepare new settings when the stock scenes were inappropriate.

From 1794 to 1799 Wignell and Reinagle were torn between their desire to present only the best in legitimate drama and opera and the increasing demand for the gaudier, but less artistic, pantomimic spectacles. Wignell's partnership with Reinagle, a professional musician and composer, led to the featuring of music. Then too, the stockholders and wealthy patrons of the theatre were fond of music and of ballet. The chief attraction at the Chestnut on December 14, 1795, was "a new pantomime Ballet 'Composed under the direction of Mons. LEGE, from the Italian Theatre in Paris.' "[34] Pepin and Breschard, French equestrians at the rival Olympic Theatre, were attracting large audiences with pantomimes containing "combats with Real Horses on the Stage,"[35] and the Chestnut Street suffered from their success.

In 1799, worried by the competition of the circuses and deficiencies in his company, and impressed, perhaps, by the enormous popularity of recent pantomimes in London, Wignell decided to concentrate on spectacle, by "producing the greatest possible novelties."[36] In carrying out this decision, he enjoyed a special advantage in that he had a virtual monopoly on the American rights to the latest London successes. As the son of an

[32] Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
[33] W. B. Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage* (Philadelphia 1855), p. 237.
[34] Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
[35] R. D. James, *Old Drury of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia 1932), p. 18.
[36] Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 66.



Interior of the Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, at its opening in February 1794. Note the raked stage and Milbourne's wing-and-backdrop setting. From a print by Ralph in the *New York Magazine* for April 1794.

actor under Garrick, he was on friendly terms with practically all of the London managers and authors. On condition that its use be confined to his theatre, he received from England an early manuscript of each new show. Models of the scenery and machinery for these productions were shipped to him also, and the artists and craftsmen of the Chestnut reproduced them as closely as circumstances permitted.[37] The theatre's best machinist was the elder Joseph Jefferson. William Wood pays tribute to

> . . . the taste and skill of Jefferson in the construction of intricate stage machinery, of which on many occasions, he proved himself a master, not infrequently improving materially on the English models sent out to us.[38]

A production with the formidable title, *Procession in Honor of the Ratification of the United States of America, July 4th,* 1788, was typical of the "novelties" presented at the Chestnut as a result of Wignell's new policy. Wood tells us that Holland and Milbourne, the principal scenic artists, prepared for this piece a series of miniature figures, six inches high, and machinery for moving them across the stage. He indicates that the theatre-going public of Philadelphia had witnessed a similar procession of painted figures in an earlier production of *Blue Beard.*[39]

Wignell died in 1803. Wood, who became joint manager with Warren in 1810, opposed the emphasis on spectacles, believing that the great cost of preparing them, both in time and in materials, more than dissipated any additional receipts which might accrue from larger audiences. Thus it would be incorrect to assume that pantomime and other spectacles ever outnumbered legitimate drama at the Chestnut. Nevertheless, the theatre, even during Wood's regime, often staged extremely elaborate shows. Convincing evidence of this may be found in the Chestnut's advertisements for performances at the Washington Theatre from 1809 to 1815.

An anonymous letter in the *Washington National Intelligencer* of July 31, 1809, complains of the paucity of scenery at the Washington Theatre during the 1809 season and expresses satisfaction that the management plans to remedy this defect in *The Forty Thieves,* scheduled for the next evening. Actually, it was not until August 4th that the visiting Chestnut company

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 237.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

presented this popular pantomime "by Richard Brinsley Sheridan," with "Scenery, Machinery, and Decorations entirely New, the scenery designed by Mr. Stuart, and executed by him, assisted by H. B. Warren."[40] Upon its revival at the Washington Theatre the following year, an advertisement in the *Intelligencer* on July 7th gave a good description of the scenery:

Scene 1st
The Fairy Grotto

This brilliant scene exhibits large masses of Coral interspersed with Marine Shells and Grass; in the distance is seen

The Glassy Lake

bounded by immense rocks. Chorus—"Fairy of the Glassy Lake!" The Fairy appears attended by Nymphs, Sylphs, Naiads, &c, drawn by Two White Swans. Her chariot is composed of a large Sea Shell, Coral and Sea Weeds.

Scene 5th

Robber's cave in the forest, interspersed with high rocks and mountains, and Cave on one side; the Forty Thieves are seen coming in full gallop over the Mountains, &c, &c.

It is interesting to speculate how the Forty Thieves came in "full gallop over the Mountains."

In 1810 the Chestnut Street Company produced two more pantomimes at the Washington Theatre. The *Intelligencer* of June 27, 1810 announces the *Foundling of the Forest*, "as performed in London, Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, with the most distinguished applause," the costume and scenery being "entirely new." Act Two contained a garden set decorated for a fete:

In the centre an open temple fancifully decorated with flowers, trophies, &c. . . . Act third represents the banks of the Rhine by Moonlight, the river flowing at a distance: on one side a Pavilion extends obliquely, through the lower window of which a light appears; on the opposite side a bower of Lattice work entwined with woodbine.

The most successful of all pantomimes was Thomas Dibdin's *Mother Goose*. Opening at Covent Garden on December 26, 1806, it ran for ninety-two performances, an unprecedented record, and established the clown, Grimaldi, as the "foremost

[40] *Washington National Intelligencer*, August 4, 1809.

low comedian of his day."[41] When, in 1810, *Mother Goose* was staged at the Washington Theatre, the newspaper advertisement gave some idea of its impressive décor and spectacular effects. It opened with a village in a storm:

> The prospect is rendered beautifully interesting by the distant view of a river and bridge over it; moving objects are seen on the river and bridge. Mother Goose appears descending from the skies mounted on her favorite bird—the Clouds disperse, as a crowd of male and female villagers assemble to celebrate the nuptials of the Squire and Colinette.
>
> Scene the Second—Mother Goose's Retreat. The scene magically changes to Mother Goose's Habitation. The scene presents to view—a Hall in Avaro's House. . . . The scene changes to A Country Tavern and a Sign Post, &c. A Puncheon with the word "Rum" written on it, and suspended to the Sign Post—By the magic power of Harlequin it descends, and is changed to a shad basket, and the fish tumble about the stage; Harlequin throws off his dress and becomes a fish woman. . . .[42]

No less than six different settings followed this scene.

The bill at the Washington Theatre for July 4, 1811, included "a celebrated Melo-Drama," called *Tekeli, or, The Deliverer of his Country,* the second act of which took place in the storehouse of a mill:

> The front filled with various implements of husbandry, sacks of flour are standing in different parts of the Store-House, large and small barrels of flour, &c: the whole opens to the river Torza. On the right a practicable windmill; a wooden bridge across the Torza, running from the right hand of the center to the upper part of the stage; on the left the distant country bounds the view; on a rock is the fortress of Montgatz.
>
> By Means of a pulley fastened to a beam on the top of the barn, they raise a dome of flowers over the heads of those at the table; . . .[43]

This account of the scene is noteworthy for the references to the "practicable windmill" and the wooden bridge, which were evidently three-dimensional. In *Mother Goose* "moving objects" were seen on the bridge, so that it too appears to have been three-dimensional. Another reference to a bridge, not necessarily three-dimensional, but possibly so, appears in an advertisement for a melodrama, *The Peasant Boy,* given at the Washington Theatre on June 25, 1812.[44] Shortly after this, the outbreak of war closed the theatre for three years.

One of the first productions there after the war was a Fourth-of-July piece in 1815, advertised as *The Hero of the North, or,*

[41] H. S. Wyndham, *The Annals of the Covent Garden Theatre* (London 1906), I, 317.
[42] *Washington National Intelligencer,* July 20, 1810.
[43] *Washington National Intelligencer,* July 4, 1811.
[44] *Ibid.,* June 25, 1812.

The Deliverer of His Country. The producers were a group of amateurs who called themselves "The Thespian and Benevolent Society." The scenic artist was a local marine painter named Grain, who later decorated the interior of the new Bollingbrook Street Theatre at Petersburg, Virginia. Apparently, this patriotic spectacle consisted of a series of tableaux in front of a "spirited representation of the Battle and Victory on Lake Erie" and a view of the "Temple of Concord." At the center of the stage in one scene was a built-up object described as "the Altar of Peace, supporting the Genius of America" with the "names of the American Commissioner is at Ghent" entwined around it.[45] Any connection between this altar and the drama must have been remote. After 1815, the managers of the Chestnut Company found Washington a poor theatrical town, and there is no evidence that they later risked transporting expensive scenery from Philadelphia.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century some of the most elaborate pantomimic spectacles in Philadelphia were staged at the Olympic Theatre. For example, the English equestrian, West, presented there, from November 1816 to January 1817, a performance of *Timour the Tartar,* with the following extraordinary features:

> Ramparts were scaled by the horses, breaches dashed into, and a great variety of new business was introduced. . . . The horses were even taught to imitate the agonies of death and they did so in a manner which was astonishing. In the last scene, where Zorilda, mounted on her splendid white charger, ran up the stupendous cataract to the very height of the stage, the feat really astounded the audience.[46]

The Chestnut countered with such spectacles as *The Armourer's Escape, or, Three Years at Nootka Sound,* a two-act melodrama by J. N. Barker, presented March 21, 1817. Quinn gives a description, from an old playbill, of the ornate tribal costumes worn by the actors in the play. The scenic effects included the burning of a ship and an eclipse of the moon.[47]

A revival of *Tom and Jerry* at the Chestnut in the autumn of 1822 featured one of the first, if not *the* first, treadmills in the American theatre. It was "fourteen feet long and four in diameter." Wood states it was an exact copy of the "original one," but

[45] *Ibid.*, July 3, 1815.
[46] James, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[47] Quinn, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

does not say where the original appeared.[48] The spectacular *Cataract of the Ganges,* produced at Covent Garden in 1823, was given at the Olympic (the Walnut Street) Theatre, Philadelphia, later the same year. In both the English and American productions "real water was used to douse a whole troop of cavalry."[49] *The Talking Bird* at the Walnut Street Theatre was the great success of the 1825 season in Philadelphia. According to Charles Durang, the machinery for it was "never surpassed in this country, if equalled." It featured revolving flats and colored lights, reminiscent of de Loutherbourg's effects at the Drury Lane in 1773. "The wings," said Durang, "reflected transparent water pyramids and water flowers, all revolving in various colours."[50]

The first production in New York to have any "great measure of scenic appeal" was Mrs. Hatton's opera, *Tammany, or, The Indian Chief,* at the Johns Street Theatre on March 3, 1794. The scenery, painted by Charles Ciceri, was "hot and glaring" but better executed than anything seen previously in New York.[51] At the Park Theatre on June 5, 1799, a showing of *The Constellation, or, American Triumph,* designed by Ciceri, presented a new departure in nautical effects: the ship was "not a mere profile, but a perfect model."[52] For an "allegorical musical drama" at the Park, July 4, 1799, called *The Fourth of July, or, Temple of American Independence,* the scenery included "a military procession in perspective . . . consisting of all the uniform companies of the city, horse, artillery and infantry in their respective places, according to the order of march."[53]

Colman's famous *Blue Beard,* which had its première at the Park on March 8, 1802, featured an amazing transformation:

> On Fatima's putting the Diamond Key to the Door, the Pictures all change to scenes of Horror, the Walls of the Apartment are stained with Blood and the Door sinking discovers the internal of the sepulchre, with its ghostly inhabitants; a moment after all resumes its former appearance.[54]

Blue Beard included a procession of miniature, painted figures,

[48] Wood, *op. cit.,* p. 299.
[49] James, *op. cit.,* p. 45.
[50] For the complete quotation, see Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia,* 1609-1884 (Philadelphia 1884), II, 978.
[51] Lawrence, *op. cit.,* p. 44.
[52] Duerr, *op. cit.,* p. 988.
[53] Sonneck, *op. cit.,* p. 96.
[54] Duerr, *op. cit.,* p. 989.

done with a fine sense of perspective. The tiny figures, operated by machinery, first appeared far upstage, apparently descending the side of a hill. A moment later the procession, now made up of costumed children, mounted on painted animals, re-entered farther down stage, traveling in the opposite direction. At its third appearance, front stage, the procession consisted of costumed adults on live animals.[55]

Equestrian spectacles, of the kind done at the Olympic Theatre, also appeared on the boards of the Park. In an 1803 production of *The Warder,* "There was a mountain 'as high as the theatre will permit' up which the hero ascended in full gallop, pursued by all the cavalry."[56] On July 4, 1803, the Park again employed an elaborate trick of perspective in staging a battle in a spectacle called *The Glory of Columbia, Her Yeomanry*: figures of "boys completely equipped" were used in varying sizes to correspond to the perspective of the machinery and scene.[57] J. J. Holland's version of the pantomime *Cinderella,* done at the Park in January 1808 "with great splendor and taste, eclipsed all other dramatic efforts and silenced all dramatists who only spoke to the ear."[58]

Dunlap's last play at the Park, *A Trip to Niagara,* was written, according to the author himself, "chiefly for the purpose of displaying scenery." Its principal attraction was a diorama in the second act, depicting, on 25,000 square feet of canvas, the scenery along the Hudson River "from New York Harbor to Catskill landing." The trick was achieved by unrolling the canvas from a vertical cylinder at one side of the stage onto another such cylinder at the other side of the stage. *The Grecian Captive,* produced at the Park on June 17, 1822, included "the appearance of the hero on an elephant and the heroine on a camel. . . ."[59]

While manager of the Haymarket Theatre in Boston, John Hodgkinson "accomplished a managerial *coup de theatre,* October 20, 1797, on the occasion of the launching of the frigate Constitution." His scene painter and machinist worked out a representation of the entire launching proceedings on the stage.[60] Another 1797 production in Boston included one of the first

[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 990.
[57] Odell, *op. cit.*, II, 181.
[58] Dunlap, *op. cit.*, p. 344.
[59] Quinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 108, 194.
[60] William Clapp, *A Record of the Boston Stage* (1749-1854) (Boston and Cambridge 1853), p. 56.

examples of built-up scenery in the American theatre. The designer for this piece, a patriotic spectacle by John Daly Burk, called *Bunker Hill, or, the Death of General Warren,* was Audin, brought up from Charleston especially for the assignment. Dunlap quotes a description of the setting from Burk's *History of Virginia*:

> The hill is raised gradually by boards extended from the stage to a bench. . . .on our hill there was room for eighteen or twenty men, and they were concealed by a board painted mud colour and having two cannon painted on it—which board was three feet and a half high. . . . A Square piece about nine feet high and five wide, having some houses and a meeting house painted on fire, with flame and smoak [*sic*] issuing from it should be raised two feet distance from the horizon scene at the back of your stage, the windows and doors cut out for transparencies We had painted smoak suspended—it is raised at the back wing, and is intended to represent Charleston, and is on a line with the hill, and where it is lowest. The fire should be played skilfully behind this burning town and the smoak to evaporate.[61]

For the staging of a patriotic play, *The Constitution and the Guerrière,* at the Federal Street Theatre, Boston, on October 2, 1811, the following effects were prepared:

> Scene 3rd. Cabin of the Ship. . . . The Guerriere is seen through the cabin window under sail—orders are given to clear the ship for action, and scene changes to *a view of the ocean.* The Guerriere is seen under easy sail and the Constitution in chase. The action commences—the mizzenmast of the Guerriere goes by the board—the action continues and the Guerriere loses her foremast and mainmast—fires a gun to the leeward and surrenders to the Constitution.[62]

This was probably typical of many naval battles on the American stage in this era.

When the Richmond Theatre burned to the ground on December 26, 1811, with a loss of at least seventy-one lives, a Committee of Investigation was appointed to determine the causes of the disaster. The Committee's report, published in the *Washington National Intelligencer,* January 7, 1812, contains an extraordinarily detailed account of scenery, handling of scenery, and lighting in a typical American theatre of this period:

> In the first act, amongst other scenes, was the scene of the Cottage of Baptist the Robber, which was illuminated by a chandelier apparently

[61] Dunlap, *op. cit.,* pp. 162, 163.
[62] Clapp, *op. cit.,* p. 135.

hanging from the ceiling. When the curtain fell on the first act and before it rose on the 2d, this chandelier was lifted from its position among the scenery above. It was fixed with 2 wicks to it; one only of them had been lit; yet when it was lifted above, the fatal lamp was not extinguished. . . . The chandelier above was moved by two cords which was [*sic*] worked over two pulleys, inserted in a collar beam of the roof; and the straight line from the beam to the roof was, Mr. Cook thinks, about 14 or 15 feet. . . .

We were assured that there was not one transparent scene hanging; that is a scene coated with varnish and extremely combustible . . . that there was only one paper scene hanging. . . . Thirty-five scenes were at that moment hanging, exclusive of the flies, roof &c—and of these, 34 were canvas paintings which, though not extremely combustible on the painted side, are on the other so well covered with the fibres of the hemp as to catch the flame.

Efforts were made to extinguish the flame. Mr. Cook, the carpenter, ascended into the carpenter's gallery; but in vain.

Note the astonishing number of scenes flown over the stage, and imagine the amount of rigging which this spectacle must have required.

For an anonymous play, *The Launch of the Delaware, or, News from Norfolk,* done in a later Richmond Theatre on October 30, 1820, the scenic artist prepared

. . . a distant view of Gosport with the Delaware on the stocks. The Steam Boat Virginia, with her Machinery &c in full operation and various other Vessels with Spectators to witness the scene.[63]

Not many years had passed since Robert Fulton launched the first steamboat. We see in theatrical spectacles of this type an early equivalent of the newsreel.

In 1828 the Richmond Theatre presented two historical dramas by a local playwright, Stephen T. Mitchell. His *The Maid of Missolonghi,* based on Byron's poem, was acted at Richmond on July 17th and repeated at the Bowery Theatre, New York, in April. This play depended heavily upon such effects as the "ocean agitated by storm" and the "Fort of Missolonghi in flames." The second of Mitchell's plays, *Heroine of the Highlands,* also featured "wild and romantic" scenery. The climactic setting showed a "grand view of the ocean agitated by a storm." The action of this scene is summarized in the *Richmond Compiler* of November 14, 1828:

[63] M. S. Shockley, "American Plays in the Richmond Theatre," *Studies in Philology,* XXXVII (1940), 100-119.

Ship of war discovered riding at anchor, fully rigged and filling the entire back of the stage. The Prince passes in a boat pursued in another by his enemies. He is on the point of being made prisoner, when the Ship hoists the French flag and fires upon the pursuing boat, which with its crew is sunk. . . .[64]

Even St. Louis, the farthest outpost of the theatre, was not without its scenic wonders in the period before 1830. The first reference to scenery there appears in connection with a production of *Tekeli, or, The Siege of Montgatz,* July 4, 1818. The advertisement includes the phrase, "with appropriate scenery and music," and it promises that "an elegant transparency" will be exhibited "in front of the theatre."[65] The era of the really spectacular in stage scenery at St. Louis begins with a painter named John H. Douberman, employed by Noah Ludlow. His settings for a "Grand Melo Dramatic Opera," *The Devil's Bridge,* performed on February 1, 1821, included a scene in which a bridge was blown up just as the villain stepped on it.

In July 1825 a local group presented *Masaniello, or, Dumb Girl of Portici* with some attempt at scenic splendor. The advertisement for the show must have come close to exhausting the printer's supply of capitals:

In the 1st act. . . . GRAND ERUPTION OF MOUNT VESUVIUS. TERRIFIC EXPLOSION!! Forked Lightenings [*sic*] Rend the Sky! THE BURNING LAVA Impetuously flows down the side of the Mountain, and the whole country becomes awfully ILLUMINATED!! FENELLA Plunges into the Sea! GRAND DISPLAY OF FIRE WORKS: POPULAR TUMULT and THE DEATH OF MASANIELLO.[66]

One wonders just how realistic these effects were. A possible answer to this question appears in a communication to the *St. Louis Republican* in 1828, commenting on Sol Smith's company. The writer suggests that those who "have charge of the lightning" during performances refrain from exposing themselves to the audience, and he begs that the producers of thunder "be more moderate," so that the dialogue may be heard.[67]

It will have been noted that nearly all of the elaborate scenery and effects discussed here first appeared in productions of the London theatres. The ties between England and America

[64] *Ibid.,* pp. 107-109.
[65] William G. B. Carson, *The Theatre on the Frontier: The Early Years of the St. Louis Stage* (Chicago 1932), p. 23.
[66] *Ibid.,* p. 81.
[67] *Ibid.,* p. 100.



Closing scene of the Boston Museum's spectacular production, *The Children of Cyprus,* the hit of the 1850-1851 season. From a woodcut in *Gleason's Pictorial* for May 10, 1851.

were very close; the London successes were reproduced, sometimes very quickly after their premières, in our own theatres.

We have found that transparencies, the device perfected by de Loutherbourg, appeared on the American stage from Boston to St. Louis. They were used most frequently in connection with stage conflagrations, especially for erupting volcanos, where, instead of the usual lights, fireworks were placed behind the curtain to depict the fire and lava shooting from the crater.

Gauzes were employed for cloud and rain effects, and sometimes rainstorms were simulated with real water. We have observed the introduction of a real waterfall in *The Cataract of the Ganges*. However, for the numerous ship-launchings, ship-sinkings, and naval battles described in preceding paragraphs, no water dampened the stage. The ships were usually "profiles" moved by ropes and pulleys behind painted waves. When Ciceri introduced a ship that was not a profile but a "perfect model," the novelty excited comment. The genuine aqua-drama, with miniature ships moving in a tank of water on the stage, could not have been seen in America until the opening of the Lafayette Theatre at New York in 1825. The Lafayette had a large tank under the stage, in imitation of London's Sadler's Wells Theatre.

That levels, ramps, and other three-dimensional pieces were in use in the American theatre very early in the nineteenth century has been shown by such productions as the *Masque Americana* at Charleston, *Bunker Hill* at Boston, and *Tekeli* at Washington. Even a treadmill appeared in Philadelphia in 1822. The vogue for trained horses and other animals, and the early use of atmospheric properties, as in *Tekeli,* were other significant innovations in the American theatre before 1830.

Moving scenery was commonplace on the early American stage. Besides the ship-sinkings and sea battles, such devices as dioramas, processions of painted figures in miniature, sudden transformations, revolving windmills, and wave effects were not uncommon. The rigging problems involved in this type of production must have demanded the greatest ingenuity. Some idea of the complicated rigging actually used for spectacles has been indicated in the report of the Committee of Investigation on the Richmond Theatre fire. The wing-and-groove setting did not disappear from the American stage until long after 1830, but

the spectacle, with its many drop scenes, certainly gave impetus to the introduction of the fly-system.

The rage for the pantomimic spectacle was, in my opinion, the greatest single influence toward moving the action behind the proscenium arch, and not the introduction of gas lighting, as some authorities believe.[68] The development, in the spectacle, of appropriate realistic details doubtless suggested the desirability of relating the actor more and more closely to the setting. Realistic scenery, like the actor, had to be seen. The greater brilliancy necessary for illuminating both was achieved in a number of ways. Technicians mounted lamps in gradually increasing numbers behind the proscenium arch. We have noted in connection with the Richmond Theatre an instance of the hanging of a chandelier "among the scenery" in 1811. There is no reason to believe that this practice, introduced in England in 1765, was rare in the American theatre after 1795. In 1784 the invention of the Argand lamp, or "patent lamp," probably accelerated the practice of mounting lights behind the proscenium arch long before gas came into general use.

In the period from 1793 to 1830, more than thirty skilled painters and machinists were practicing in America, the best of whom were probably J. J. Holland, Milbourne, and Joseph Jefferson in Philadelphia; Charles Ciceri in New York; Worrall in Boston; and Audin and his son in Charleston. Working from models and designs brought over from the Continent, and also from designs of their own, they exhibited ingenuity and originality. Some of them, like Audin, achieved prominence in more than one city. There was never a period in the American theatre when the craft of the stage designer and scene painter enjoyed greater prestige.

[68] See, for example, Swanson, *op. cit.*





SAMUEL PHELPS AS CARDINAL WOLSEY

From a print by Gebbie; after a painting by Johnston Forbes-Robertson now the Garrick Club of London.

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SHAW, SHAKESPEARE, AND *CYMBELINE*

by

E. J. WEST

In previous papers I have demonstrated through an analysis of Bernard Shaw's actual criticism of Shakespearean stage production that the great body of Shavian comment upon this problem has a unique and positive value as evidencing not the alleged eccentric iconoclasm and irreverence but rather "the sound maturity and mellow wisdom of the fellow expert, the fellow professional, the fellow technician."[1] Herein I intend further to pursue this study by analyzing Shaw's various approaches to one of Shakespeare's minor but most controversial plays, *Cymbeline*: first, as knowledgeable student of Shakespearean acting, in his epistolary advice to Ellen Terry on the playing of Imogen; second, as knowledgeable Shakespearean drama critic, in his review of the Lyceum production of September 1896; and third, as close student of the text and appreciator of the dramatic and theatric values inherent in the *Cymbeline* script, in his "variation" of the fifth act of the play.

The Correspondence

Before the Lyceum production went into rehearsal, Shaw had, so far as I can discover, been little drawn to study of "this silly old Cymbeline."[2] But when Ellen Terry wrote to him in July 1896 of her difficulties in mastering the part of Imogen, his interest in all matters theatrical and his desire to help the actress led him to consider the play and Ellen's own immediate problem seriously. He answered that he found "downright maddening" her "slaving over Imogen," for there was in the character too much of "a Bishop's wife" for her to be fully in tune with it. He recommended that she learn Shakespeare "by ear; for his

[1] "G. B. S. on Shakespearean Production," *University of North Carolina Studies in Philology*, XLV (2) (April 1948), 216-235; and "G. B. S., Music, and Shakespearean Blank Verse," *Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honor of George F. Reynolds, University of Colorado Studies: Series B*, II (1945), 344-356.

[2] *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, ed. Christopher St. John (New York 1931), p. 36.

music is unfailing."[3] In view of Shaw's expressed dislike for both play and heroine, his praise of Shakespeare's music is notable. That he finds the music "unfailing" does not suggest the distaste for Elizabethan poetry of which he is frequently accused.[4]

During the next month the tempo of the correspondence accelerated rapidly as two intent and understanding practitioners of theatric art interchanged ideas on specific problems of technique. Within a week Shaw wrote a lengthy analysis of Imogen and of much of the script, which Miss St. John, the editor of the correspondence, wittily subtitles "The Intelligent Actress's Guide to Cymbeline." He confessed himself baffled by the "double image" of Imogen presented in the artificial play: the "real woman" unconsciously *"divined"* by Shakespeare and the "idiotic paragon of virtue" who represented Shakespeare's compromise with conventional views. He was disturbed, as all open-minded and unidolatrous readers of the play must be, by the contrast between the "natural aristocrat," high-tempered and courageous whose moods alternate between "childlike affection and wounded rage," and the perfect wife and housekeeper, self-conscious reader of "improving books" and suspector of improper behavior in other people. A great enemy of wanton cutting of a Shakespearean script, Shaw, faced with a problem of actual stage effectiveness, advised: "cut the part so as to leave the paragon out and the woman in."

Discussing "good" lines in the part (he found only four), he praised one of them, "Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief," as the only line of "pure rhetoric in Mrs. Siddon's [*sic*] style" (a somewhat dubious and enigmatic bit of praise), but he objected that the words, "Thy master is not there, who was, indeed, the riches of it," were unnecessary, as Ellen Terry could convey their meaning by her delivery of the first line. Here is nice appreciation of the player's contribution to the meaning of words in theatric performance.

Rightly Shaw urged the actress to cut "the miserable Attorney's rhetoric" and "the wretched impossible logic chopping" from Act III, scene iv. And vehemently he pleaded: "oh, my God, dont read the letter." Stressing the point that a lady would not read such a letter to a servant, he suggested that in-

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[4] For a recent attack, see Thomas Marc Parrott, *Shakespearean Comedy* (New York 1949), p. 378.

stead Pisanio read it aloud at the very beginning of Act III, scene ii, offering careful and persuasive instructions for blending the matter of the letter with Pisanio's words there set down. Then the actress in the fourth scene could pantomime the reading of the letter with the knowledge that the audience was already familiar with its contents. Again he gave detailed instructions for the handling of the scene in gesture, facial expression, and delivery of the lines. Here Shaw's analysis of the whole business of acting is alert and astute, sensitive and satisfying.[5]

Ellen Terry approved of most of his suggestions. But to the proposal that Pisanio read the letter, she retorted that she planned to pretend she was reading it aloud to herself, because Frank Tyars, cast for Pisanio, was not a good enough actor to be relied upon to get it across to the audience.[6] This particular exchange of comment concerning the playing of Imogen embodies a kind of Shakespearean criticism too rarely written—that having to do with practical matters of production. The average scholar, unless a hopeless purist guarding the sanctity of Shakespeare's script, would be tempted to consider Shaw's suggestion concerning the letter on an abstract or arbitrary basis, on its merits as a theoretical idea. But drama at its highest point of intensity is not idea, nor poetry, nor anything else; and theatre is whatever is here and now. Between Shaw and Ellen Terry the discussion of *Cymbeline* was not an academic one: the here was Irving's Lyceum and the now was the forthcoming production in September wherein the make-up and casting of Irving's company were matters of vital importance.

Following the suggestion that Imogen merely act the reading of the letter, Shaw went on to recommend cutting "all the rubbish out of the scene which follows." Again he was completely practical, copying down the lines between Pisanio and Imogen as he would amend them, noting suggestive bits of business and interpretation, tightening the dramatic situation by trimming sixty-five lines down to twenty-five, and getting rid of the sentimental removal of Posthumus's letters from Imogen's bosom. If this sort of "rubbish" were discarded, the result, he pointed out, would be "an intolerable load off your memory and off the real side of Imogen."

[5] *Correspondence*, pp. 36-37.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

He next attacked the awakening scene beside the dead body of Cloten. Having demonstrated his sense of dramatic economy and climax by his suggested cutting of the Pisanio-Imogen scene, he now showed his amazing ability to visualize down to the smallest detail a very complicated and difficult bit of business, in terms of the actress who was to play the scene. Objecting that the words, "a headless man," come in the wrong place, Shaw, to prove his point, carefully analyzed the entire business of the awakening in phrases that show how well he had studied the acting of Ellen Terry and how equally well he appreciated Shakespeare's exquisitely suggested slow rise from a "dim, half asleep funny state of consciousness," in which the bedfellow is discovered, through the "puzzly-dreamy" picking up of a flower only to find it bloody, to the resultant coming "broad awake" and to the kneeling in prayer with hands over eyes "in the hope that when you remove them your prayer will be answered and the nightmare gone." But the body is still there, and Imogen exclaims, "A headless man!" Believing this exclamation to be "an overlooked relic of some earlier arrangement of the business, Shaw showed how much better the scene plays without it:

> Your attention is caught by the garment of Posthumus; you go on with the recognition step by step . . . at last you lift the cloak to see the face, and then—"Murder in Heaven!" you go tearing, screaming, raging mad and rave your way to the swoon as best you can. . . .[7]

The long paragraph in which Shaw, to defend the cutting of three small words, visualizes in complete and moving detail the whole awakening scene should be required reading for all players and directors.

Any intelligent actress would be flattered by such minute and discerning direction. It is a loss that this exquisite care to both author and player was never extended by Shaw to a whole production of a Shakespeare play. Ellen Terry confessed pleasure and surprise at the proposed business ("lovely") and promised to practise it.[8] She now sent Shaw the proposed acting version of *Cymbeline,* with her own annotations on the reading of Imogen. He read it "carefully through" immediately and dispatched her another long list of suggestions, including comment on a hitherto unnoted scene, that in Act II between Imogen and Iachimo,

[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 37-39.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 40

where alone she had "slipped out of the character." Imogen, he claimed, "is an impulsive person, with quick transitions, absolutely frank self-expression, and no half affections or half forgivenesses," who rages when anyone abuses Posthumus, but is delighted when he is praised. He objected to the actress's directions beside her speeches to Iachimo: "wary of him" and "polite —words, words, words." Iachimo's attitude, he felt, should "humbug her completely." And he saw her offer to take the chest into her bedroom as a sign of complete forgiveness.[9] This is unexpected, for Shaw usually has been quick to recognize in Shakespeare a piece of pure theatrical device, and surely the chest business is merely the arbitrary carrying-out of plot.

But Ellen Terry reread the Iachimo scene through Shaw's eyes and decided that his reading, though difficult, was right. She argued feebly over the matter of the chest, merely quoting "her Lord hath interest in them."[10] Incidentally, her attempt in performance to act out the impulsiveness and the "absolutely frank self-expression" enjoined upon her by Shaw did not please all critics. William Archer felt she should have treated Iachimo "frostily." Never one of the actress's warmest admirers, Archer, like many critics, thought her triumphs those of temperament alone. There is a certain irony in his cavalier dismissal of Ellen Terry's Imogen as well as a certain puzzle-headedness in his conclusion that the result was "a real and charming woman, if not a poet's ideal."

William Winter, usually one of the actress's most willing slaves, complained that the performance was "disordered and incorrect" here and there through indulgence in "lawless levity" and "hoyden-like glee," and "the interpolation of exclamations, interjections, comments aside, etc., and sudden, extravagant, and, to her associate performers, obstructive, disconcerting movements and gestures."[11] I offer no brief for the Shaw-Terry impulsive Imogen; I doubt Shaw was responsible for the audible "comments aside." I have been unable to arrive at a satisfactory final reading for the Iachimo-Imogen scene, but if the character worked out by Shaw and the actress produced a credible "real and charming woman," I submit that this was a more

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[11] William Archer, *The Theatrical 'World' of* 1896 (London 1897), pp. 274-275; William Winter, *Shakespeare on the Stage. Third Series* (New York 1916), pp. 93-94.

stageworthy accomplishment than would have been "a poet's ideal." The proof of a theatric conception is in the performance.

Shaw's next bit of rehearsal advice concerns what seems to be an obvious reading, but the actress saluted it as "Pretty business," obviously new to her.[12] So it is worth mentioning. With reference to the words immediately preceding Cymbeline's entrance in the first scene, he directed that the actress "shiver with love" at Posthumus's touch and sigh with rapture at the words, "O the gods!" before subsiding to the eternal feminine question, "When will you come again?" After a renewed but mild plea for having Pisanio read the letter, Shaw strongly objected to the cutting in the remainder of the scene of much that was "beautiful or expressive" and the retaining of "such tawdry trash as 'slander whose tongue envenoms all the worms of Nile.' " He also vetoed the tearing of Posthumus's letters from Imogen's bosom as "very poor business." Here surely he was right; such business would savor of Sardou. His most illuminating plea was for keeping the prayer for "as small a drop of pity as a wren's eye." Wisely he pointed out: "You will find it a blessed relief (prayer is better than crying for that purpose) and to kneel and pray with your eyes covered will be beautiful."[13] The actress, apparently having overlooked his previous suggestion of this particular bit of business, declared it "exactly right," and promised to "put back 'the wren's eye.' "[14]

Shaw found Irving's acting version on the whole "stupid to the last extremity" and prudish to the point of silliness, spoiling every part but his own and damaging even that "by wantonly cutting off your white and azure eyelids laced with blue of heaven's own tinct."[15] Twenty-five years later Shaw was to return to the question of Irving's cutting the lines concerning Imogen's breathing and record the actor's genuine astonishment when told that they were "famous for their beauty."[16]

Before the opening night Shaw offered no more detailed criticism, but confined himself to quieting Ellen Terry's preproduction jitters. "Take your own Imogen as if it were *the* Imogen and play it for all you are worth," he advised, warning

[12] *Correspondence*, p. 44.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[16] G. Bernard Shaw, "On Cutting Shakespear," *Fortnightly Review*, CXII (1919), 215.

her to pay no attention to a first-night "missfire in this or that line."[17] On the morning of the opening, he sent a letter of sharp encouragement which the actress acknowledged the next day: "Well, they let me down kindly, but—you and I know it was all rubbish, and as I only care for what 'you and I' think, why —!"[18] Again the recognition of Shaw as a fellow-practitioner, a fellow-perfectionist.

The day after production, Shaw wrote, promising that his review would be "nasty." He praised her beauty on the opening night; he chided her gently on certain points; but he resolutely criticized what he thought wrong, "a crumple in the roseleaf here and there." He chastised her for "one AWFUL mistake." Before Ellen Terry had half seen the body of Cloten, she had "actually bawled out" the words, "A headless man!" As usual, his criticism was constructive: "You must simply start in horror, give the audience time to see in your face what is the matter, and then say 'a headless man' in a frozen whisper. If you must make a noise, screech like mad when you start." Objecting also to the amount of slow, hesitant, and apparently Irvingite business which the actress had used in the scene of the discovery of the cave, Shaw pithily and pungently declared: "In playing Shakespear, play *to* the lines, *through* the lines, *on* the lines, but never between the lines. There simply isnt time for it."[19] This frank after-production criticism proves that he felt on safe ground with Ellen Terry in matters of art. Few leading ladies, one suspects, would welcome such comment after a much-applauded opening, but she was typically more interested in her technique than her temperament, and with generous gratitude accepted both criticisms: "Difficult to undo the wrong things which have been practised quite carefully, but I shall delight to try at it." She was intelligent enough and earnest enough about her art to have welcomed Shaw's advice and help in any case, but she admitted an added reason for her eagerness to accept it: Irving, resting securely on her personal popularity, had not directed her scenes,

[17] *Correspondence*, p. 47. In her memoirs Ellen Terry recorded: "I think as Imogen I gave the *only* inspired performance of those last rather sad years" (*Ellen Terry's Memoirs* [New York 1932] p. 249), and in her lecture on "The Pathetic Women" she confessed: "I am 'foolish fond' of this heroine. When I am asked which is my favourite part, her name rises spontaneously to my lips. She enchants me, and so I can find no fault in her" (*Four Lectures on Shakespeare* [London 1932], pp. 159-160).

[18] *Correspondence*, p. 58.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

but worked only on the minor members of the company and the stage management.[20]

Three days after the opening, Shaw informed her that his review had gone "irrevocably to press." On the question of management, he begged that she read the review carefully, since he had failed her in not previously urging upon her "the importance of the scenic setting." As it was, the bright, cheery set provided by Hawes Craven for the awakening scene fought the mood and killed the actress's big scene. Begging her to "dictate the scene plot" if she ever played Shakespeare again, Shaw enunciated the foundation principle of his whole Shakespearean criticism: "Ellen: art is one and indivisible."[21]

The Review

Shaw's formal Shakespeare criticism was based upon this principle of the unity and the indivisibility of art. His review of *Cymbeline* in *The Saturday Review* of September 26, 1896 was not particularly "nasty," but rather, for him, unusually lenient.[22] The title, "Blaming the Bard," sounded the keynote. Announcing that he did not intend to defend the play, "in parts abominably written, throughout intellectually vulgar," and "exasperating beyond all tolerance," he proceeded to one of his most vigorous assaults upon Bardolatry, including the too often and too ignorantly quoted:

> With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespear when I measure my mind against his. . . . To read Cymbeline and to think of Goethe, of Wagner, of Ibsen, is, for me, to imperil the habit of studied moderation of statement which years of public responsibility as a journalist have made almost second nature to me.

Surely the tone here is rather one of deliberately needling irony than of aesthetic sincerity. He followed this blast at the blind "worshippers" of Shakespeare by proclaiming his pity for those who "cannot enjoy" the dramatist and specifically praised his story-telling ability, his command of words, his humor, "his sense of idiosyncratic character; and his prodigious fund of that vital energy which is . . . the true differentiating property be-

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
[22] Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* (London 1932), II, 195-202.

hind the faculties, good, bad, or indifferent, of the man of genius." Examining the characters of the play, Shaw found Cymbeline, his Queen, Posthumus, Belarius, and Pisanio "nothing," and Iachimo only a plausible *"diabolus ex machina."* But in contrast to these he highly praised Cloten ("the prince of numbsculls [*sic*]"), Guiderius and Arviragus ("fine presentments of that impressive and generous myth, the noble savage"), the urbane Caius Lucius, and especially Imogen. The reader of the Shaw-Terry correspondence is prepared for the ensuing analysis of two Imogens, one an "unspeakable person" possessed of chronic "virtuous indignation" and an indescribable "fertility and spontaneity in nasty ideas"; the other, "tied to her with ropes of blank verse (which can fortunately be cut)," the true Imogen who to Shaw *was* Ellen Terry.

Admitting the necessity of cutting *Cymbeline,* Shaw attacked Irving furiously for his regular habit of "disembowelling" Shakespeare, here shown at its worst in the removal of "the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge," in the ruthless defacing of Cloten's "grotesque character tracery," and in the shearing away of the patriotic scene with its fine speeches by the Queen, Cloten, and Lucius. But Shaw's critical integrity forced him to admit that although Irving's "curious want of connoisseurship in literature" produced unpardonable cuttings, his real "creative quality" allowed him to make of such parts as Iachimo acting masterpieces "in flat contradiction of the lines." He contrasted Shakespeare's "lay figure" with the actor's "fresh and novel" Iachimo, "a true impersonation," consistent in its impression of life and "in the sustained beauty of its execution," yet "varied on the surface with the finest comedy."

Shaw dismissed the playing of most of the cast with scant and suitable brevity. Of Norman Forbes' Cloten he complained that it was "a fatuous idiot rather than the brawny 'beef-witted' fool whom Shakespear took from his own Ajax in Troilus and Cressida." Over the misconception of the "noble savage" sons of the king he grew more angry, condemning their affected poses and business and "their utter deficiency in the grave, rather sombre, uncivilized primeval strength and Mohican dignity so finely suggested" in the play. Their misinterpretations and the inappropriate Hawes Craven setting, he submitted, combined to detract

greatly from Ellen Terry's big scene in the awakening beside the corpse.

Of the actress herself he wrote that she "invariably fascinates me so much I have not the smallest confidence in my own judgment respecting her." He complimented her on having evidently cut her own part, since, "the odious Mrs. Grundyish Imogen had been dissected out of it so skilfully that it went without a jar." A comparison of his advice to her during the rehearsal period on the awakening scene with his review of her performance suggests that Ellen Terry had profited by his correspondence coaching, for the review passage is a paraphrase of his previous instructions. "Properly stage-managed," he declared, the scene "would have been a triumph of histrionic intelligence," but it was "ruined by that blazing, idiotic, prosaic" setting. There is graciousness in this tribute to a histrionic intelligence which he had himself so painstakingly fostered, and common sense in the accompanying diatribe upon Irving's managerial shortsightedness. Too seldom are graciousness and common sense linked in journalistic criticism.

The Variation

Shaw had never been satisfied with the dramaturgy displayed in *Cymbeline*. Prior to the Lyceum production, he had contrasted "the great dramatist who changed Imogen from a mere name in a story to a living woman" with "the manager-showman" who descended to the sensationalism of the awakening scene.[23] More than a year after this observation, he accused Shakespeare of caring so little for "naturalness in the business of the stage" in *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* as to make use of the *deus ex machina* and "the exasperating clownish interruptions he once denounced."[24] In the 1901 preface to *The Admirable Bashville,* he complained of "such a mess of verse half developed into rhetorical prose as Cymbeline."[25] In the early 'thirties he wrote to Harcourt Williams, who as director of the Old Vic was "a little sore at the reception of *Cymbeline*":

> *Cymbeline* be blowed! Nothing could make it a success except an actress volcanic enough to bring off the impossible scene where the lady wakes up and finds that somebody has thoughtlessly cut off her husband's head.

[23] *Ibid.,* II, 183.
[24] *Ibid.,* III, 241.
[25] Shaw, *Prefaces* (London 1934), p. 739.

Probably Shakespeare had a bet that he could write a worse last act than that of the *Two Gentlemen of Verona.* If so, he won it. I offered Miss Baylis to write a new last act for it; but she was mad enough to refuse.[26]

The threat of composing "a new last act" Shaw carried out in 1937 "not wholly as a literary *jeu d'esprit,* but in response to an actual emergency" when the Stratford Memorial Theatre proposed to revive the play. Shaw, a governor for that year, "thoughtlessly" approved the revival on condition that he revise the fifth act. To his surprise, "this blasphemy was received with acclamation," and he had a second surprise when he read "the authentic last act carefully through" for the first time in many years. He found that the conventional impression of it as "a cobbled-up affair by several hands" is "an unpardonable stupidity." He declared the act "genuine Shakespear to the last full stop, and last phase Shakespear in point of verbal workmanship." He even justified the doggerel of the vision scene as "a versified masque," introduced to please King James or in conformity with some new stage fashion. By retaining the masque and the typically Shakespearean comic gaoler, Shaw thought the last act might prove very entertaining; but as usually cut he declared it "a tedious string of unsurprising *dénouements* sugared with insincere sentimentality after a ludicrous stage battle." He believed that all the characters, with the exception of Posthumus, had become mere puppets.[27] As "the only character left really alive in the last act," Shaw decided to leave him in the main unchanged, but to try to "bring the others back to dramatic activity and individuality."

Cornelius he eliminated entirely, since his only dramatic job is to make the undramatic announcement that the Queen is dead, and also cut all of "the surprises that no longer surprise anybody."[28] These surprises as a part of plot bored Shaw, who re-

[26] Harcourt Williams, *Four Years at the Old Vic,* 1929-1933 (London 1935), p. 188.

[27] As early as January 1897, Shaw found in late Shakespeare an occasional "anticipation of the crudest side of Ibsen's polemics on the Woman Question," and instanced *Cymbeline,* "where Posthumus, having, as he believes, killed his wife for inconstancy, speculates for a moment on what his life would have been worth if the same standard of continence had been applied to himself" (Shaw, *Our Theatres, op. cit.,* III, 2).

[28] Granville-Barker strangely praised "the elaboration of the finale," as "so important a piece of the play's economy that the producer must analyse it with care and see that its every twist and turn is given value," and he argued that "The action is kept alive by a series of surprises . . . eighteen of them" (Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare, Second Series* [London 1935], pp. 276-277); Hardin Craig gloats over twenty-three "phases of revelation in the great fifth scene" (Hardin Craig, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* [New York 1948], pp. 326-327). However many there be, Shaw is obviously right in claiming these surprises kill the action rather than keep it alive.

peated his oft-asserted dictum that plot is "the curse of serious drama," and argued that surprises appeal only to "infantile" members of an audience. He felt adult spectators like himself would want to know how Imogen, Iachimo, and the princes "would react to the *éclaircissement* which follows the battle," and decided that the only way to satisfy this curiosity was "to rewrite the act as Shakespear might have written it if he had been post-Ibsen and post-Shaw instead of post-Marlowe."[29]

He retained eighty-nine of the original lines and "matched" them with two hundred and thirteen lines of his own. That is, the Shavian variation has three hundred and two lines as against eight hundred and thirty-six in the Kittredge edition. In a musical analogy, instancing the composition of variations by Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, Bach, and Handel, he confessed he had not confined himself "to a journeyman's job of writing 'additional accompaniments,'" but had "luxuriated in variations," and he recommended his version to managers who lacked "the courage and good sense to present the original word-for-word as Shakespear left it, and the means to do justice to the masque." The audience, he argued, would never know the difference, and the few critics who knew the original would "be too grateful for my shortening of the last act to complain."[30]

Shaw's variation is written as one continuous scene, laid in "A rocky defile" on "A wild evening." The act opens with a scene of fifty-one lines in which Philario and a Roman captain with "a badly battered" helmet discuss the course of the battle in which, the captain says, both Lucius and Iachimo were "outgeneralled" by the startling "discipline" of the islanders. The captain ruefully reflects upon their aim:

> Well: see their work? Two inches further down
> I had been blind or dead. The crackbrained Welshmen
> Raged like incarnate devils.

Philario, who has evidently been reading his new creator's *O'Flaherty, V. C.*, drily replies: Yes: they thought We were Britons." They agree that "this witless savage Cymbeline, Whose brains were ever in his consort's head," could not be respon-

[29] The "variation" of the fifth act of *Cymbeline* is to be found in Shaw, *Geneva, Cymbeline Refinished & Good King Charles* (London 1946), pp. 139-150.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 133-138. This "foreword" is substantially unchanged, except for a final passage, from that originally published in *The London Mercury* (XXXVII [1938], 373-378).

sible for defeating "Roman-trained infantry," and the captain suspects the recall of Belarius, who "knew his job." The scene is brisk, businesslike, mildly humorous, with no distinction of line or phrase, but it sums up the battle far more rapidly and much more credibly than the alarums and excursions, the portentous dumbshow, and that egregious dissertation of Posthumus to a Lord of the original second and third scenes.

They exit and there follows the original first scene, the entrance and the soliloquy of Posthumus, which Shaw strangely regarded as anticipative of Ibsen, and which is quoted intact, except for very slight changes, in lines nineteen to twenty-six. The ensuing fight between Posthumus and Iachimo, carried out in pantomime at the beginning of the original second scene, Shaw provides with words which rise to a slightly bathetic climax. Hailed by Posthumus as "Seducer of my wife," Iachimo retorts:

> No more of that.
> Your wife, Posthumus, is a noble creature.
> I'll set your mind at rest upon that score.
> Pos. At rest? Can you then raise her from the grave?
> Where she lies dead to expiate our crime?
> Iac. Dead? How? Why? When? And expiate? What mean you?
> Pos. This only: I have had her murdered, I.
> And at my best am worser than her worst.
> Iac. We are damned for this. (On guard) Let's cut each other's throats.
> Pos. (Drawing) Ay, let us.

As they fight, there enter Cymbeline, Belarius, Guiderius, Arviragus, Pisanio, Lucius and Imogen, the last two as prisoners. Belarius takes instinctive command, and the princes disarm the combatants. Cymbeline asks Posthumus, "What art thou?" and he, with Ibsenite self-pity, answers, "A murderer." Recognizing his voice, Imogen runs to him and "puts her hand on his face." To keep to the fore both the princes and Posthumus, Shaw has the youths attack Posthumus when he strikes Imogen. Offering to take on the princes "one at a time," Posthumus appeals to Cymbeline:

> Call off your bulldogs, sir. Why all this coil
> About a serving boy?

If "bulldogs" seem in strange company with "all this coil," at least a lively scene of action is added. Imogen begs for death since her husband, believed dead, has met her ecstasy with a

blow. The lovely lines, "The tune of Imogen," spoken incongruously in the original by Cymbeline in recognition of one of his daughter's more purely aristocratic outbursts, is replaced by this speech from Posthumus:

> Her voice. 'Tis Imogen.
> Oh, dearest heart, thou livest. Oh, you gods,
> What sacrifice can pay you for this joy?

Imogen, behaving like an Ibsenite heroine and inviting discussion rather than like a Shakespearean lady hastening the end of the play, says indignantly, "You dare pretend you love me." Posthumus, transformed by the Shavian ideology into a sex-infatuated and woman-dominated modern male, answers with grand irrelevance:

> Sweet, I dare
> Anything, everything. Mountains of mortal guilt
> That crushed me are now lifted from my breast.
> I am in heaven that was but now in hell.
> You may betray me twenty times again.

Retreating to the non-modern convention, Imogen virtuously asks when she has betrayed him. He points to Iachimo who immediately acknowledges the wager. Imogen inconsequently says: "You made this wager! And I'm married to you!" She protests that Iachimo never entered her bedchamber. In words ill-suited to Irving but from which a Shaw-directed actor might get a laugh, Iachimo says:

> I spent a night there.
> It was the most uncomfortable night
> I ever passed.

To Iachimo's confession that he was in the chest, Shaw adds the stage direction: "Hilarious sensation," strangely suggesting a burlesque-audience reaction. When Iachimo admits to the theft of the bracelet, Posthumus, echoing the words of Bassanio, Petruchio, and other self-seekers, accuses the Roman of cheating him of the diamond ring, and they haggle over the proper payment of the wager, to be interrupted by Imogen:

> And this, you think, signors, makes good to me
> All you have done, you and my husband there?

Iachimo, now a Shavian innocent loose in a modern world neither he nor his creator can understand, answers with a good dramatic though unrealistic, speech:

> It remedies what can be remedied.
> As for the rest, it cannot be undone.
> We are a pitiable pair. For all that
> You may go further and fare worse; for men
> Will do such things to women.

As the three argue over money, moles, and murder by proxy, Guiderius suddenly threatens with "Thor's great hammer-stroke" to kill Posthumus, were he "fifty sons-in-law." Imogen, relying on her charm, asks her "newfound brothers" if they would have sent "a slave" to kill her, were she "ten times faithless," and they swear their loyalty.

However, Shaw like Shakespeare is "slave" to the plot and so Posthumus insists upon knowing why Imogen should have thought him dead. No one onstage notes that he is changing the subject. To her answer, "I saw a headless man dressed in your clothes," Guiderius remarks magnificently:

> Pshaw! That was Cloten: son, he said, to the king.
> I cut his head off.

To this Cymbeline replies in the words of the original, and for some seventy-five lines the act proceeds as in Shakespeare, with minor emendations and omissions, up to line 339. But when Belarius orders his foster sons to pay their "loves and duties to your royal sire," the Shavian Guiderius is not so eager as was the Shakespearean to accept a new way of life. Complaining that the three "are fullgrown men and perfect strangers," he asks, "Can I change fathers as I'd change my shirt?" Cymbeline, branding him an "Unnatural whelp," turns to Arviragus, but the younger brother wants no more fathers' "hindrances" than the elder: "I am tired of being preached at." Cymbeline berates Belarius for his way of breeding "my puppies." Belarius points out, with modern wisdom, that parents cannot tell their "children's minds," and offers to assume the blame for Guiderius's boldness, but the son declares, "I am of no man's making," and demands to be taken as he is. Iachimo tells Lucius to mark the prince's words, since "There spake the future king of this rude island."

Taking this cue, Guiderius, obviously moving from ancient Britain to England in 1937, delivers himself of a magnificent speech alluding to the abdication of Edward VIII:

> I am to be, forsooth, another Cloten,
> Plagued by the chatter of his train of followers,
> Compelled to worship priest invented gods,
> Not free to wed the woman of my choice,
> Being stopped at every turn by some old fool
> Crying "You must not," or, still worse, "You must."
> Oh no, sir: give me back the dear old cave
> And my unflattering four footed friends.
> I abdicate, and pass the throne to Polydore.

Arviragus is not pleased: "Do you, by heaven? Thank you for nothing, brother." Cymbeline with pardonable irony comments:

> I'm glad you're not ambitious. Seated monarchs
> Do rarely love their heirs. Wisely, it seems.

But Guiderius, having had his say about kingship, precipitates a brief penultimate scene in which Cymbeline, losing patience with the bickerings of Posthumus and Imogen, tells his son-in-law:

> God's patience, man, take your wife home to bed.
> You're man and wife: nothing can alter that.
> Are there more plots to unravel? Each one here,
> It seems, is someone else. (To Imogen) Go change your dress
> For one becoming to your sex and rank.

When Imogen grumpily revives her annoyance with Posthumus, Iachimo good-humoredly chides her about the silliness of the whole misunderstanding, she retorts:

> Oh, do not make me laugh.
> Laughter dissolves too many just resentments.
> Pardons too many sins.
>
> Iac. And saves the world
> A many thousand murders. Let me plead for him.
> He has his faults; but he must suffer yours.
> You are, I swear, a very worthy lady;
> But still, not quite an angel.
>
> Imo. No, not quite.
> Nor yet a worm. Subtle Italian villain!
> I would that chest had smothered you.
>
> Iac. Dear lady
> It very nearly did.

Imo. I will not laugh.
I must go home and make the best of it
As other women must.

As Posthumus declares, "That's all I ask," Belarius hastens the end with the Soothsayer's original words:

The fingers of the powers above do tune
The harmony of this peace;

The long-silent Lucius speaks:

Peace be it then.
For by this gentleman's report and mine
I hope imperial Caesar will remit
His favour with the radiant Cymbeline,
Which shines here in the west;

And Cymbeline ends the play with the last speech from the original.

Even Granville-Barker, after an attempt of over one hundred pages to whitewash *Cymbeline,* admitted that "No one will rank *Cymbeline* with the greater plays. It is not conceived greatly, it is full of imperfections."[31] Nor need we expect the play ever to become popular. The governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, although they were interested in having Shaw revise the fifth act, did not revive *Cymbeline* in 1937, and it was left to Ronald Adam to try out the Shavian variation later that year at London's Embassy Theatre. A typical review damned the whole "in no sense felicitous" production as providing "a most unlucky evening." The fault was found in the all too frequent "nonsense" which formed the first four acts, and Shaw was specifically praised for "a five-minute charade with a few wisecracks about the Abdication" which was "quite good fun."[32] When the play was given again at Stratford in 1949, it was again damned, and labelled "the least successful" of the season's productions, "a curious muddle" that "cannot be held together" but must be played "scene by scene for the effect of each of them by themselves."[33]

[31] Granville-Barker, *op. cit.,* p. 345.

[32] *New Statesman and Nation,* XIV (1937), 877.

[33] T. C. Worsley, "G. B. S. and Cymbeline," *ibid.,* XXXVIII (1949), 11. Despite his title, Worsley discussed only Shaw's criticism of the Lyceum production and seemed unaware of the existence of the Shavian last act. *Cf.* Robert Herring's review of the Stratford production, *Life and Letters,* LXII (1949), 219-220.

So we conclude that Shaw's attempt to refurbish the play by giving it a new ending may be considered in the nature of a labor of love for a dramatist he has always admired and always defended. Little certainly has been lost from the last act that another lover of Shakespeare will seriously miss; what dramatic charm is resident in the characters of Imogen, her brothers, and Iachimo, Shaw attempted to keep alive and consistent; he has even put some liveliness into the wooden king, and he has preserved even more than some of us would wish of the unheroic hero. While agreeing with Granville-Barker's fondness for the omitted comic gaoler and his praise of the line, "O, the charity of a penny cord!" ("That flash of a phrase which gives him life . . . is actuality supercharged; there is solid man summed up in it."[34]), one feels that too much listlessness of dialogue, character, and action must be retained to save that lonely gem. Shaw has given to Imogen, to Iachimo, and to Guiderius more than one flash of life-giving speech, more than one hint of "solid man."[35] If his verse be occasionally pedestrian, it is throughout, to use Barker's phrase for some of the duller bits of the original last act, "good enough"—something more than that, I should say.

Surely few fine minds have given to *Cymbeline* so much attention, in such varied capacities, as has Bernard Shaw. Admitting the technical nicety and even brilliance of his direction of the great Ellen Terry in what she herself liked to think of as her favorite role, and the shrewdness of his criticism of the Irving production, one can accept his variation upon the last act either as pure *jeu d'esprit* or as a not unilluminating essay in dramaturgy, a unique specimen of one major playwright's emendation of the work of another. And one may apply to the experiment a line from the original that Shaw did not incorporate into his variation: "Pardon's the word for all."

[34] Granville-Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

[35] I wish to protest against Joseph Wood Krutch's unconsidered repetition of an old fallacy concerning Shaw in his review of the *Geneva* volume. He wrote: "All the characters . . . even the Imogen of the new attempt to improve Shakespeare, talk like Shaw rather than like themselves" (*The Nation*, CLXV [1947], 388). The "solid man" who speaks in each of the Shavian dramatic characters is always a dramatic conception and never, at least consistently, Shaw. There is undeniably a Shavian style, as there is a Shakespearean style, but the amazing thing about *Cymbeline: A Variation* is how well the two, if both in diluted form, blend.

STREETCAR CONDUCTOR:

SOME NOTES FROM BACKSTAGE

by

ROBERT DOWNING

It is difficult for me to imagine that anyone above the age of five has not knocked at some stage door, determined to penetrate the magic world beyond the footlights. Indeed, in the past ten years, I have welcomed on backstage visits such a procession of callers that I am amazed to learn that this host comprises but ten per cent of all playgoers. To forestall a possible invasion, I hasten to set down here a few notes about the workaday routine of the playhouse. I am writing during the last week of the Broadway engagement of Tennessee Williams' prize-winning play, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* for which I have acted as production stage manager throughout most of its run of 855 performances at New York's Barrymore Theatre. Because this play is fresh in my mind, and because many of the problems it has posed in backstage operations are typical, it should be a good subject with which to initiate the uninitiated.

Before I take you behind the scenes, I want to caution you that if you have gotten your impressions of backstage life from American films and fiction, they are apt to be romantically deceptive. A few novels and plays, however, have treated stageland realistically. Elmer Rice's *The Show Must Go On,* whatever its literary merit, contains the best reporting to date on Broadway theatre, and there is much good material about stage life on tour in Fitzroy Davis' *Quicksilver.* In drama I mention only Wilder's *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth,* Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine,* and the Spewacks' *Kiss Me Kate.* Other plays give authentic glimpses backstage, but these will serve, particularly because they introduce you to the stage manager.

Stage managers are usually the least interesting persons back of the curtain line. They lack the dash of actors and the colorful personalities of stagehands. It is not difficult to meet

a stage manager; it is only hard to identify one, should you happen to be sitting next to him in a restaurant or public conveyance. Let us assume that I am known to you for what I am, that we have met and chatted together, and that on our parting I have issued the invitation you have been seeking: "Drop by the Barrymore on our final matinee day. And come early."

If you have taken me too literally and come very early, you will learn that the stage manager is not the first to arrive at the theatre. You will also become acquainted with one of the perils to players: finding the stage door. Ours is not unlike most—a dingy portal that abuts on a dark and dirty alley. Its keeper is the stage doorman, a former player, a man rich in years and voluble by nature. About ten o'clock he unlocks the door, and you enter with him.

As he sorts the actors' mail and flips the various advertisements and fan letters into pigeonholes near his desk, he gladly explains what has taken place in the theatre this morning. A corps of cleaning women, trailing the odor of strong soap, has already passed and attacked the auditorium with mops. There, in the glare of work lights that give an added garishness to gilt and red plush, they have scrabbled for discarded playbills, chewing gum, and milady's glove, dropped under a seat at last night's performance.

With the doorman's permission, you step upon the empty stage. It is hung with the fragile draperies of semi-darkness. Directly center, casting a feeble gleam across the boards and into the auditorium is the pilot light—a small electric bulb perched on the end of an upright pipe, like an illuminated microphone. You ask the doorman about this light, and he informs you, somewhat condescendingly, that it is demanded by insurance companies to prevent heaven-knows-what mishaps to persons who may be prowling about in the darkened playhouse.

Your eyes are now accustomed to the gloom, and you are able to contemplate the theatre at rest. In this state it is seldom seen by strangers. Indeed, even experienced players, coming upon a dark stage in an empty house, are inclined to tread softly and to speak in the hushed voice usually reserved for producers' offices.

You are standing in a vaulted cavern. Only a few seats are

visible out front, and there is but the faintest suggestion of a balcony rail, sculptured boxes, and a chandelier looking, from this vantage point, as though it had been dipped in plastic cobwebs. Speech, even a whisper, rebounds and ricochets from the galleries, the invisible staircases, the alcoves, and the dusk-bound lounges. If ghosts inhabit playhouses—and a good many people of the theatre believe they do—surely this must be the time for them to take charge. Here the favorite seats for all the hits of yesterday are vacant and beckoning; the boards are ready to support such fantasies as memory may invoke; and in the empty pit there is room for all the strings and brasses that once made the walls vibrate with their power.

Suddenly the doorman obliges by turning on the stage work lights—great naked lamps dropped on chains from the emptiness overhead. Now here is magic of another sort—the setting for *A Streetcar Named Desire* revealed in uncompromising brightness. You see the dingy, barren, two-room apartment of the Kowalskis in the French Quarter of New Orleans—faded carpets, battered furnishings, gauze backwalls permitting a view of a narrow street, a circular staircase leading up and out of sight, wings and masking pieces covered with black velour, batteries of lights now cold behind their colored gelatins —all the cleverness of designer Jo Mielziner.

I enter, also by way of the stage door—one connected with backstage operations never comes into the playhouse through the front door—and interrupt your musings by walking on stage. We shake hands. I observe that you have looked around and probably have some questions. What is my job? You know that I am a stage manager. But what are stage managers? An elderly wardrobe mistress once described them as the housekeepers of the theatre, and I think she was right. In connection with Williams' play I like to look upon myself as the operator of the streetcar named Desire, helping passengers aboard and watching them alight as the car moves towards the end of the line. You want me to be more specific and explain the workings of a theatre? Well, here goes.

Authority in the playhouse is split between the company manager, or business manager, and the stage manager. The former is responsible for everything that happens in the front of the house and for most of the financial arrangements of the

production. Behind the scenes the stage manager is in complete charge. The theatre is equipped with a house manager, treasurers (cashiers), ushers, porters, doormen, washroom attendants, and stagehands. The stagehands, members of both the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and the Stagehands' Union, are paid by the producer, the lessee of the theatre. They belong to one of three departments: carpentry, lighting, and properties, better known as "props." Each department has its chief. During the run of a play, he co-ordinates his department with the other two, and the members of all three departments comprise the play's crew.

When it is time for the show to commence, the house electrician dims the "houselights," and the production "juicers" put on the stage lights. The house carpenter and his assistant raise the curtain, and the production "grips" stand ready to move scenery between the acts if required. The house property master helps the production property man and his "clearers" sweep and set the stage and remove props from the scenes as needed.

The stage manager is also an employee of the tenant producer. He is supposed to co-ordinate the activities of all departments, including that of the wardrobe personnel, actors, and musicians; to get the play started on time; to see that it runs smoothly; to help select and instruct replacements and understudies; and generally to do what he can to maintain opening night standards throughout the run of the play. He must try to be diplomat, father confessor, medicine man, and factotum at the beck and call of everyone.

Under Lehman Engel's musical direction, the offstage music for Williams' play stems from two major sources: a four-piece jazz band that plays at the Four Deuces Bar near the Kowalski apartment, and the phantom rendering of an old folk tune, *The Varsouviana,* heard only by Blanche Du Bois at moments when her faculties waver. In one of the Barrymore's upstairs dressing rooms there is a broadcasting chamber for the musicians. Equipped with microphone, cue lights, a warning buzzer, and an intercommunication system that keeps them in touch with an assistant stage manager watching the play from the wings, the musicians remain in their room throughout the perform-

ance, "flying blind" as it were, when it comes time for them to activate a cue.

In the upper left-hand corner of the set there is a closet in Stella Kowalski's bedroom. Like most of the walls in Mielziner's set, the wall of this closet is transparent. Behind it stands the assistant stage manager in charge of sound and music. From her post she is able to follow the action on stage and hear the dialogue. She is provided with an intercommunication system that puts her in touch with the band and the sound man who is situated on the opposite side of the stage where he cannot see the play. She warns them both when their cues approach, then with signal lights and buzzer she directs the music to begin, and whispers to the sound man to "fade it in" over one or more of the many loudspeakers distributed about the stage. In back of her is the Novachord. Resembling in some respects a Hammond organ, this instrument projects *The Varsouviana*. Cues are given the musician visually by the assistant stage manager.

At the lower right-hand corner of the set, the street known as The Elysian Fields wanders off into the French Quarter, disappearing from the audience's view at a point not far from the bowling alley frequented by Kowalski and his friends. The "exit" of this street fortunately provides a large opening in the wings through which it is possible for the stage manager to keep an eye on the stage. Behind me are arranged seven portable switchboards and pre-set switchboards, controlling lights for the production. Nearby is the sound technician. Downstage stand the carpenters who raise and lower the house curtain between acts and scenes. The rest of the wing space is occupied by a thunder drum, amplifiers for sound and music, and tables loaded with hand properties for the actors.

During the play, I am rooted to this corner of the stage, or one of my assistants has to stay on the job if I go out front to check the performance from the house. Excluding sound and music cues, there are in the eleven scenes of *Streetcar* more then sixty light cues, many of them occurring simultaneously or in rapid succession, and all of them important to the spirit of the play.

In addition to warning the two production electricians at our boards to stand by for cues and to implement them at the

proper moment, it is my task to watch the changes of lighting, to check with the electricians, making certain that every lamp of the hundreds on the lighting plot works correctly, and to let the boards know at once should a lamp blow out, or if a cue fails to materialize properly.

In a projection booth above and behind the balcony, another electrician operates a spotlight geared so that it follows Blanche throughout many scenes of the play. Color frames for this light are supplied in both blue and amber for moments in which light on the set supposedly derives from daylight, moonlight, or candlelight. The electrician in the booth is out of touch with backstage, and keeps his attention constantly upon the play to pick up his cues.

Recorded sound effects are played by the sound man on one or both of the turntables with which his station is provided. Thunder is produced by combining a recorded effect with the noise of an old-fashioned thunder drum pounded on cue by one of the property men. Other sounds include a siren, the bells of the Cathedral of St. Louis in Jackson Square, and the various whistles of trains that pass along the tracks just outside the Kowalskis' windows. All these effects are brought in on cue by the girl assistant in the upper left-hand corner of the stage.

A good many duties fall upon the shoulders of my second assistant. He calls "half-hour" at eight o'clock every evening and at two in the afternoon on matinee days. He checks dressing rooms to make sure that actors and musicians are present. He carries a complete prop and wardrobe list, and checks the placement and condition of these items before each performance and between scenes. He advises me when replacements or repairs are necessary. He again notifies actors both fifteen and five minutes before curtain time, and summons them to the stage for each act, making certain during the play that they are ready in the wings in time for their entrances. Between acts, he peeks into the auditorium, notes the moment when most of the audience is re-seated, and passes this information along to me so that I can ring up the curtain promptly. During the performance he is responsible for giving a cue to one of the property men for producing an off-stage shot heard only by Blanche. This means that he must keep an ear on the dialogue, make certain that the prop-

erty man is poised for the cue, and, at a given word in the script, signal him to produce the shot effect by slapping a leather seat cushion sharply with a supple stick.

One of Blanche's foibles is her preoccupation with steaming baths. Originally, we attempted to manufacture steam to come from the bathroom with the aid of involved machinery which fed upon evaporating Dry Ice. Dissatisfied, we finally hit upon the scheme of placing my assistant in the room with Blanche. Provided with a cigarette, he stands just out of sight behind the door, and blows smoke into the bathroom for several minutes. When Blanche opens the door, the smoke curls handsomely into the amber cross-lighting on the set.

Understudies are obliged to be present at the Barrymore for each performance, even though the actors they cover are in excellent health, for illness may strike at any time. One evening we played the first act with our leading lady and the next two with her understudy because an attack of food poisoning had suddenly incapacitated the star. A career of understudying is one of the most thankless tasks in our profession. In more than two years of *Streetcar* some of the understudies have been seen by no audience. The understudy who finally performs, receives almost no publicity, yet he must be prepared always and give a good account of himself at a moment's notice. Contrary to legend, few understudies succeed to the roles they cover, and not many of them move to greater heights as a direct result of their understudying assignments. Eight times a week they sit in dressing rooms, staring into their mirrors. Once a week they meet on stage in the unfriendly glare of the work light and play their hearts out for an audience of one—the stage manager who must rehearse them. In these rehearsals, due to stringent union rules, understudies are allowed no props; they are not made up; they do not wear the wardrobe their parts require. They are eternally playing scenes to an empty house with other understudies whom they could not expect to meet in corresponding roles should they finally have to step into the play at performance time.

When a play runs a long time, personnel changes are inevitable. To the stage manager falls the job of preparing replacements and rehearsing them carefully—first alone, then with the understudies, and finally with the first-string players with whom they will act in performance.

Qualifications for a stage manager are not easy to define. He needs the gift of anticipation—a nose for trouble, and the knack of preventing crises. He must fill his mind with ways and means to keep his show together in any emergency. He must know how to deal with fire, panic, epidemics that decimate his cast overnight, and unforeseen acts of God and man.

In order to discharge his duties, the stage manager must belong to Actors' Equity Association, the performer's union—but he is not permitted to act. As a relief from the confines of their craft, which has developed more complexities in recent years than any occupation in the theatre field, many stage managers have banded together in a club, which, with Equity's sanction, allows members to commiserate with one another, to attempt to educate the Council of their union (predominantly composed of actors, the traditional enemies of stage managers), and to campaign for improved working conditions and higher minimum salaries.

It does not surprise me that you ask who wishes to become a stage manager. I don't know. Not I. Not my friends who are stage managers. Some of us wanted to be actors, and were actors for a time. But acting jobs are scarce. When a chance to stage-manage came along, we took it, and finding that we worked more steadily in the new capacity, we put away our grease paint. Of course, many of us hope to become directors, producers, playwrights. Almost all of us feel we are marking time.

There is a definite ceiling on the earnings of a stage manager and little definition of the tasks that may be heaped upon him. There is no glamor in his position. Only the most neurotic martinet could enjoy the pinch of authority a stage manager can wield. So if you meet one who calls himself an assistant director or a production executive, treat his whim gently. He may be little more than a glorified script girl in the most exciting days of a play's rehearsal period, and quite often he is the whipping boy for some of the theatre's worst egomaniacs.

Your glazed eye tells me I have rattled backstage skeletons too long. I apologize. You have another question? "How do the actors remember all those lines?" I haven't the faintest idea. But they seldom forget. If they do, we try to prompt them from the master script in which nearly everything concerning the production is written down in an orderly fashion. During the run of

Streetcar, nobody has *ever* forgotten. One more question? "Does not make-up hurt the actors' faces?" This way out, please. Call again—when some other production is playing here.

Maybe Maude Adams and Charles Frohman were right after all. They believed that audiences should remain one hundred per cent in the auditorium.

■

GERMAN AUDIENCES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

ALOIS M. NAGLER

Foreword

In this article and in a major monograph on European theatre audiences from the Middle Ages to the present time, the author has worked with three concepts through which spectator reactions toward theatrical performances can be typified. Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie* has provided the tools. Nietzsche has shown us the Dionysian spectator who, in fact, is not yet a spectator but rather a participant in cultic rites. Moreover, he has reconstructed the origin of the Socratic spectator and has defined the Apollonian audience, though the philosopher spoiled his concept of this esthetic playgoer by his own youthful Wagnerian enthusiasm. But Nietzsche had the Apollonian enjoyment of dramatic art in mind when he wrote that the true spectator "remains always conscious of having before him a work of art and not an empiric reality." Nietzsche was groping his way toward the Dionysian spectator when he thought that through Greek tragedy the chasms between men had been bridged by an overwhelming feeling of unity which transformed the individual into a member of a higher community, a cultic practitioner. He had been in a position to study this intoxicated spectator type at the first Bayreuth festival, and he had one of his greatest visions when he conjured up the scene in which Euripides is a spectator at a performance of an Old Tragedy. Euripides, to whom intellect was the fountainhead of creative art and its enjoyment, had to confess that he was unable to understand his illustrious forebears on the stage. In his embarrassment he looked for an ally and found him in Socrates, the philosopher, who had identified virtue with knowledge. Greek tragedy of the old style perished through Socratism and was succeeded by a theatre in the service of world improvement through dissemination of knowledge. Theoretical optimists of the Socratic type created this new theatre for spectators who took pride in the fact that in their theatres they were being taught "to think things through and rule their houses better, too."

Theatres for the Middle Class

Social life in eighteenth-century Germany is characterized by the shifting of cultural emphasis from the feudal courts to the citizens' towns.[1] Cultural decisions were no longer made in Vienna or Dresden, but in Leipzig, Hamburg, Zurich, Frankfort, Königsberg, and Göttingen. The middle class, excluded from all political responsibility, produced cultural, artistic, educational, and religious values, leaving public affairs to a more or less enlightened despotism. As the bourgeoisie developed its inner life ever more strongly and, with ever greater determination, created works of culture, it found the feudal reality of the state all the more morally inferior.

This transformation, both social and psychological, was reflected in the drama, and it was Gottsched who took the first theatrical step out of the ideological world of feudal absolutism. He realized that the German middle class had no theatre. He found bitter words to describe the condition of the opera, that darling of the court society, a rapture for the ears and eyes of the "pampered" spectator, but too costly a pleasure even for most German princes. While the ruling class enjoyed this luxury art, the lower classes found delight in the *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen,* raving especially about their burlesque interludes. Ekhof remembered having seen one of these farcical intermezzi, *Adam und Eva,* when it was presented by strolling players in Strassburg:

> There one saw a fat Eve, whose body was covered with poor flesh-colored canvas and to whose skin had been glued a small girdle of fig leaves. Good old Adam appeared just as ridiculously dressed. God the Father wore a long white beard. The devils played the buffoons. For the rest, everything was disgusting. A poor planked booth served as a playhouse; the scenery was miserable; the actors, dressed in rags and wearing old wigs, looked like cabbies who had been disguised as heroes. In a word: the comedy was a pleasure only for the rabble.[2]

Wishing to fill the vacuum between primadonna and harlequin, Gottsched tried to create, in a test tube, a homuncular

[1] For the following see G. Müller, "Die Wende vom Barock zur Aufklärung," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft,* VIII. (Freiburg 1936).

[2] Quoted from G. J. von Reden-Esbeck, *Caroline Neuber und ihre Zeitgenossen* (Leipzig 1881), p. 48. When half a century later, in *Hermann und Dorothea,* the son of the innkeeper visits the house of the manufacturer and merchant prince, he hears the daughters of the upper middle class speak and sing of Tamino and Pamina, names with which he is not familiar. When he inquires as to their meaning, he is ridiculed: "He knows only Adam und Eva!" A significant passage for literary sociology, which was pointed out by H. Schöffler, *Protestantismus und Literatur* (Leipzig 1922), pp. 155 f.

drama for the middle class. His model drama should no longer have merely a decorative function in the entertainment schedule of the courtiers and their sophisticated hangers-on; on the other hand, it should also rise above the coarseness of the popular farce. With this aim in view, he wrote *Der sterbende Cato* and translated the masterpieces of French classicism, when German plays of the regular genre failed to materialize upon command. Gottsched thus forced literature and theatre together into a union which by no means was organic. He introduced the heroic style to the bourgeois public of Leipzig, while the Neuber couple and their company toured Hamburg, Frankfort, Strassburg, and Königsberg with the new repertory. And yet, Gottsched was the first one to put into practice what Goethe was to continue later in Weimar, namely, the attempted reconciliation of those irreconcilables—literature and theatre. He, however, could only provide scanty fare for his show-hungry contemporaries, and, by having to train the ears of both spectators and actors, he made heavy demands on them. The actors had to start by learning to recite alexandrines, and their audience had to become accustomed to the new rhythm before they could grasp the meaning of the plays. We learn of the difficulties encountered in Hamburg, when J. Neuber reported to Gottsched that the unusual verse form was responsible for "a certain obscurity, with the result that the auditor cannot at once understand everything said. We must have patience; it will come in time." But a little later he was able to report: "The labor devoted to improving taste does not seem to be altogether lost. Some hearts have been converted here, too. People of whom one could scarcely expect it have become lovers of poetry, and many take considerable pleasure in the regular plays." There is no doubt that Gottsched achieved one thing: the educated who had shunned the spoken drama and, in the company of aristocrats, had turned their whole attention to the opera, began to enter the legitimate playhouse.

However, Gottsched, who in his *Weltweisheit* had so effectively popularized Wolff's rationalistic philosophy, naturally could not rest satisfied with a purely esthetic reform. He could not separate the esthetic from the moral sphere. For him poetry was a great moral force, and the theatre in particular seemed to be a place where the rules of social conduct might most strikingly be propagated. The baroque theatre of the senses could

suffer no deadlier blow than by the introduction of the Socratic element. It received this blow when in his *Kritische Dichtkunst* Gottsched made this celebrated pronouncement:

> The poet chooses a moral tenet, which he wishes to instil into his auditors by means of scenic representation. To that end he invents a general theme, which illustrates the truth of his tenet. . . . The whole theme has one principal aim only, namely, a moral proposition.[3]

The next step was taken by Johann Elias Schlegel.[4] But he rejected Gottsched's pedantic formula that just one moral lesson should be drawn from a dramatic work and that this precept should dominate the play. He was the first in Germany to express an interest in Shakespeare; the first, too, to warn against the copying of French patterns. He was dissatisfied with the "cold-bloodedness" which German spectators exhibited when viewing French plays. He ascribed this reaction to the fact that, on the German stage, the spectators were not privileged to see characters in whom they could have confidence, but rather the exclusive representation of the French way of life, with which the German middle class had no contact.

The fifth decade of the century was to see a change in this respect. English domestic tragedy was introduced into Germany and acted as a counterweight against the hitherto preponderant French element. In Lillo's *The Merchant of London* the German bourgeoisie for the first time had the opportunity of seeing the affairs of its class treated seriously on the stage. Consequently, the play had a tremendous success, especially in the trade centers. In the preface that graced the German edition of the play one could read the following passage:

> May this example be a warning to all young persons who devote themselves to trade, for in all commercial towns there are many Barnwells who thoughtlessly continue on this ruinous path. Let them rather choose to imitate the honest Trueman, that loyal and industrious employee.[5]

Lessing once said that he preferred Lillo's play to Gottsched's *Cato*. "One performance of the former," he wrote in defense of

[3] J. Ch. Gottsched, "Von Tragödien und Trauerspielen," in: Gottsched's Lebens- und Kunstreform, ed. Brüggemann, *Deutsche Literatur, Aufklärung*," III (Leipzig 1935), pp. 41 ff.

[4] *Cf.* J. E. Schlegel, "Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters," in: Aesthetische und dramaturgische Schriften, ed. Antoniewicz, *Deutsche Literaturdenkmale des XVIII. und XIX. Jahrhunderts* (Heilbronn 1887).

[5] Quoted by F. Brüggemann, Die Anfänge des bürgerlichen Trauerspiels in den fünfziger Jahren, *Deutsche Literatur, Aufklärung*, VIII (Leipzig 1934), 20.

his opinion, which reveals the new criterion applied to the drama, "makes even the most insensitive shed more tears than even the most sensitive can possibly shed at all performances of the latter. And tears of sympathy are the only object of tragedy."[6]

Stimulated by Lillo, Lessing wrote his *Miss Sara Sampson,* another reflection of the middle-class world. The "coldbloodedness" of the German audiences melted before familiar surroundings. The spectator became personally concerned with the action presented on the stage. A witness of the first performance of Lessing's domestic drama in Frankfort reported: "The spectators sat as still as statues and wept."[7] In Berlin, even Nicolai shed tears, and Klotz, in Hanover, was not ashamed to weep and related that his neighbor in the auditorium had tried to suppress his overwhelming emotion by hysterical convulsive laughter. The most interesting testimony with regard to the impression made by *Miss Sara Sampson* is to be found in Iffland's memoirs:

> On one occasion my worthy father came home from a performance of *Miss Sara Sampson.* Sara's sufferings had quite softened him. "It is instructive to witness," he said, "how the daughter falls into misfortune, and children can there realize what a poor father suffers through their thoughtlessness. I shall send all my children to the theatre when this play is repeated."[8]

Thus we see that the middle class looked upon the theatre as a school of virtue (or vice), completely setting aside any esthetic judgment.[9] It was by no means customary for the middle classes to visit the theatre, and the head of the family carefully informed himself of the play's utilitarian value before he encouraged his children to see it. It must not be forgotten that the majority of the weekly magazines that entered middle-class homes still eyed the theatre very skeptically. As late as 1774, the *Allgemeine deutsche Wochenblatt* wrote:

> It is as true as ever that regular visits to the playhouses are most harmful to young persons in general and to those in particular who have devoted themselves to commerce. In this way they lose a great deal of time; they are rendered unfit for serious matters of business and are prevented from acquiring the knowledge most essential to a merchant.

[6] From Lessing's preface to his translation of Thomson's tragedies.

[7] See E. Schmidt, *Lessing* (Berlin 1909), I, 291.

[8] A. W. Iffland, "Meine theatralische Laufbahn" in *Dramatische Werke* (Leipzig 1798), I, 12.

[9] For the following see A. Nollau, *Das literarische Publikum des jungen Goethe* (Weimar 1935), pp. 83 f.

A year later, the *Belehrenden Unterhaltungen zum Nutzen und Vergnügen* pointed out:

Most plays are of a kind to which children cannot be conducted without their innocence being impaired. The best plays are often followed by a frivolous afterpiece and impudent pantomime. But all are more or less modelled on the taste of those who most often witness them, that is to say, on the taste of idle and lewd people.

This latter outburst was aimed at young gentlemen of quality who went to the theatre merely to amuse themselves and to concentrate their interest on the actresses' dressing rooms. (Later Schiller had to settle accounts with this type of playgoer.) Their taste was chiefly satisfied by operettas, which, to the horror of Gottsched, succeeded in packing the playhouses after German opera had died an undeserving death.

In 1741, Gottsched had proudly written the obituary of German opera, and now he had to take the field once more against what to him was another musical monstrosity. He saw his life's work threatened. Taste, which he had purified with so much effort, was again being corrupted. He was thinking of the German versions of Coffey's *The Devil to Pay* when he lashed out against translators of English plays:

They have no thought for the advancement of morals or of good taste, they wish to prove only that they understand English and are able to put it into indifferent German. As for the comedians, there is an additional desire for financial gains, since, like magicians, they hold the spectators in their spell by performing such wild pieces. Sorcerers, phantoms, devils, dances, songs, disguises, and a hundred other absurdities appear all together, enchanting the weak heads of the rabble. The preparations for lechery are often carried so far in word and gesture that little is lacking for the consummation. Beds and undressed persons are even shown on the stage. What an impression this makes on youthful minds and, indeed, on the old who strive to appear young![10]

The continued existence of the "unpurified" theatre must be clearly visualized, for only then can we understand the suspicion with which Christian household heads looked upon the stage. Even Frau Neuber had to employ comic interludes, though she tried to keep these intermezzi on the level of *La serva padrona*.

While Lessing admitted that the German theatre had been in a sad condition when Gottsched became interested in it, he was

[10] Quoted by J. Minor, *Christian Felix Weisse und seine Beziehungen zur deutschen Literatur* (Innsbruck 1880), p. 147.

not in accord with the cure prescribed by the Leipzig professor. In his opinion Gottsched had failed to recognize "that we want more to see and reflect on in our tragedies than is offered by the timid French tragedy; that the great, the terrible, and the melancholic are better suited to us than the pretty, the tender, and the amorous; that excessive simplicity tires us more than excessive complication." Therefore no salvation for the German theatre could be expected from the French; it had to come from Shakespeare who was far closer to German taste than Corneille. (There is a striking similarity here to Neander's position in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*.)

Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* is a great and unparalleled attempt to set up the taste standards of a literary elite against those of the solid majority. On the opening day of the National Theatre he began his education of the public by inviting it to come, to see, to hear, to examine, and to judge. The opinions of the multitude would be received with respect as long as they viewed innovations without prejudice:

> He has no taste who has only a one-sided taste. True taste is catholic taste, which turns its attention to beauties of every kind, but expects no more pleasure and delight from any one than that can provide according to its kind.[11]

The various phases in the history of the Hamburg National Theatre do not concern us here, but the prologue for the opening performance deserves our attention, as we are able to determine the relationship between stage and auditorium on that occasion. Madam Löwen delivered the prologue, which strongly underlined the theatre's utilitarian function. Dramatic art was sent by divine providence "for the barbarian's good, so that he may be made human." The theatre is able to transform "the savage into a human being, a citizen, a friend, and a patriot." Tragedy is a teacher of kings. In epochs when freedom is shackled, tragedy shows the tyrant his own image; it makes crowned murderers tremble, it sobers the ambitious man and chastises the hypocrite by "summoning the dead to give instruction." Thus the Hamburg prologue contained in a nutshell what Schiller was to make explicit later in Mannheim.

The attempt to found a National Theatre was bound to fail,[12]

[11] G. E. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Ankündigung.

[12] See J. G. Robertson, *Lessing's Dramatic Theory* (Cambridge 1939), *passim*.

for none of the elements involved had attained the degree of maturity necessary for such an ambitious undertaking. Plays were lacking; the actors were a disappointment; and the public did not stand up under the test. Klotz remarked in his *Deutsche Bibliothek* that it would have been better to entrust Lessing with the management rather than the criticism of the Hamburg stage, for the German theatre was still too young and could not, at this stage of development, be aided by criticism, but only by deeds that might serve as a model. Without wishing to minimize the value of the *Dramaturgie,* Klotz saw it exercise an unfortunate influence on the public:

> It will become a fashion to judge a tragedy not according to the emotions it arouses in the spectator, nor in accordance with the tears it makes him shed, but rather according to an esthetic terminology; the little sensibility that was beginning to stir in our public will be stifled by philosophical frigidity.[13]

And Klotz was by no means wrong. Through the reform party the public had become disgusted with the scraps from Gottsched's table. The spectators themselves had indeed become tired of alexandrine tragedies. The new theories, on the other hand, had at first produced nothing but confusion, especially since criticism had advanced so far ahead of creativeness. The National Theatre had therefore been unable to fulfill its magnificent promises, since a dramatic literature corresponding to Lessing's theories existed only in budlike beginnings.[14]

Lessing's *Dramaturgie* began to bear fruit, however, when Schröder took over the management in Hamburg and could serve up *Emilia Galotti* in 1772, *Clavigo* and *Götz* in 1774, and in the following year bring about the naturalization of Shakespeare. In all this Schröder proved himself an extremely clever educator of his audience. First of all, he gathered around himself a small circle of enthusiastic friends of the theatre—lawyers, scholars, and educated merchants—with whom he discussed recently published dramatic and critical works. These theatre enthusiasts formed a kind of club, whose program provided for daily theatre attendance, influence over public opinion in the auditorium as well as after the performance, and also for the maintenance of good behavior and order in the theatre.

[13] C. A. Klotz, *Deutsche Bibliothek,* III (1769), 42 f.

[14] *Cf.* B. Litzmann, *F. L. Schröder* (Hamburg/Leipzig 1894), II, 22.

Usually they occupied the front benches in the parterre, and people seemed so glad to grant them this priority in seating, even without formal agreement, that spectators in the pit not belonging to this club often offered their seats to club members who arrived late. These self-elected leaders applauded good new plays or well-acted scenes. They insisted on good behavior and silence, when unjust praise, malicious blame, or any indecent expression was uttered in the auditorium, whether in the boxes or in the gallery.[15]

They served as Schröder's shock troops, upon which he could rely, when he began to feed his audiences stronger fare.

In his experiments with his patrons, Schröder demonstrated in general an infallible instinct for what reactions he might expect from them.[16] Thus he allowed Hamlet to remain alive, and just for this reason the play was successful. One contemporary observer, to be sure, was inclined to assume that "the curiosity of seeing a ghost on the stage had attracted not a few people." On the other hand, the same witness assures us that "the audience, always very large, was so attentive, so transported, that it seemed, as if only one person, only one pair of eyes, only one pair of hands were present. So general was the silence, the rapture, astonishment, weeping, and applause."[17] That on occasion Schröder could overestimate the maturity of his audience, is proved by the failure of *Othello*. The force of this tragedy overstrained the nerves of the Hamburg women just as Ducis' adaptation had been too much for the delicate nerves of the women of Paris:

Fainting spell followed fainting spell. The doors of the boxes clapped open and were shut. One walked out or, if necessary, was carried out, and according to certified reports, the premature and unsuccessful confinement of this or that well-known lady in Hamburg was the result of seeing and hearing this over-tragic drama.[18]

Schröder finally consented to make weakening concessions, thanks to which Desdemona and Othello remained alive. How little even the quite progressive Hamburg audience knew about the difference between original quality and routine imitations was proved by the fact that J. G. Schummel's violent piece, *Die Eroberung*

[15] Quoted by J. F. Schütze, *Hamburgische Theater-Geschichte* (Hamburg 1794), 398.
[16] F. L. W. Meyer, *Friedrich Ludwig Schröder* (Hamburg 1819), II, 375
[17] Litzmann, *op. cit.*, II, 193.
[18] Schütze, *op. cit.*, p. 454. In the preface to his adaptation of Othello, Ducis reported on the effect of the final scene in which Desdemona was stabbed before the eyes of a fashionable audience: "No impression was ever so terrible. The entire assembly rose and uttered one single cry. Several women fainted."

von Magdeburg, unrecorded by literary history, outstripped Goethe's *Götz* in popularity.[19]

Storm and Stress Audiences

Schiller's youthful mind was haunted by the question: Why do people attend the theatre? In order to admire the slender body of an actress, the elegance of her feet, the grace of her movements; or out of boredom, to shorten unfriendly winter nights; or to have their emotions aroused; or to settle their digestion? Schiller grew indignant at contemporary audiences and expressed his scorn in the essay, *Über das gegenwärtige Theater.* He saw in the theatre an institution, which, standing essentially on the same plane as morals and religion, was stained and profaned by the "imbecile and dirty rabble" and degraded into a place for sensual titillation. They applauded the cuckolds on the stage and pointed at their neighbors in the pit, instead of reaching for their own horns. Shudders ran through their frames when they witnessed Macbeth's depravity, but criminal statistics showed no turn for the better. Innocence was still seduced, although Miss Sampson had to expiate her misstep. Desdemonas of the populace still suffered from unfounded jealousy in spite of *Othello.* In short, the school with which Schiller identified the theatre could point to no practical pedagogical results. He ended his essay on this note of resignation: "Before the audience is educated for its stage, it can hardly be expected that the stage will educate its audience."

Later, in his Mannheim lecture, Schiller spoke at great length of the immediate influence of theatrical impressions upon the everyday life of the citizenry. What effect can a good permanent stage really have? was his topic.[20] It was Sulzer's essay *Über die Nützlichkeit der dramatischen Kunst* and Lessing's *Dramaturgie* that gave Schiller the spiritual framework with which in his Mannheim lecture he developed the ideas of his earlier essay. Two years previously he had mentioned the theatre in the same breath with morals and religion. Now he asks how would it be if these three should join hands to work for the ennoblement of the human race? What a strengthening of religion and laws there

[19] See Litzmann, *op. cit.,* II, 143.

[20] The lecture appeared as "Die Schaubühne als moralische Anstalt betrachtet" in the *Rheinische Thalia* (1785).

would be, "if they should ally themselves with the theatre, where there is vividness and a living presence, where vice and virtue, blissfulness and misery, foolishness and wisdom concretely and truthfully pass before mankind in a thousand pictures." What could not the stage accomplish then!

First, it would support temporal justice: "The exercise of justice on the stage begins where the realm of secular justice comes to an end." Crimes of the past are brought upon the stage to instruct us and to frighten us away from them. "Salutary horrors" will attack the guilty in the auditorium, while he whose conscience is clear will consider himself fortunate as he follows Lady Macbeth's futile attempts to cleanse the blood stains from her hands. Just because of its vivid directness the stage will have a deeper and more lasting effect than any laws. We shall grow wiser upon seeing *Timon,* and *Cinna* will help us to overcome our hatred for our enemies.

Second, even beyond the realm of law the stage is active in our education. "It is the stage which holds up a mirror before the great class of fools." With healthy scorn it chastises bad social conduct, lashes at our weaknesses, and yet spares our sensitivity while doing so. The stage is "a school of practical wisdom, a guidepost through daily life." It cannot eradicate vice, but it can make us acquainted with it. Thus an unsuspecting innocent may learn to guard herself against gallant yet false protestations of love, even though the lecher may not be converted.

Third, we become more tolerant by attending the theatre. Our judgment of criminals will henceforth be milder, since, through the medium of the stage, we have gained an insight into the dark mechanics of human entanglement in guilt. "Humaneness and forbearance have become the ruling spirit of our times. Their rays have penetrated the law courts and even beyond: they have entered the hearts of our princes. How great a share in this godly work is owed to our stages?" And how might mistakes in education be better corrected than through the stage, where fathers may learn to give up their obstinacy and mothers learn to love more reasonably?

Finally, with a longing glance at the Greeks and the national content of their plays, Schiller concludes:

If in all our pieces one main characteristic were to prevail, if our poets would unite and weld a solid bond for the purpose of devoting their pens to national topics only, in a word, if we should have a National Theatre, then we would also become a Nation.

Schiller had his fears that *Die Räuber* would be misinterpreted and considered an apology for vice. He did not expect such a misunderstanding on the part of a few connoisseurs, but he did anticipate it from the rabble, in which he included many a plumed hat and many a lace dress. In his original preface to the play he has left us an impressionistic (and therefore hardly translatable) account of the motley taste preferences of a typical German audience at this time:

Mort de ma vie, sagt Herr Eisenfresser, das heiss' ich einen Sprung!—*Fy-Fy*, flüstert die Mamsell, die coeffure der kleinen Sängerin war viel zu altmodisch—*Sacre dieu*, sagt der Friseur, welche göttliche Simfonie! Da führen die Deutsche Hunde dagegen! Sternenhagelbataillon, den Kerl hättest du sehen sollen das rosenfarbene Mädel hinter die spanische Wand schmeissen, sagt der Kutscher zum Lakaien, der sich vor Frieren und Langweile in die Komödie eingeschlichen hatte—Sie fiel recht artig, sagt die gnädige Tante, recht gustös *sur mon honneur* (und spreitet ihren damastenen Schlamp weit aus)[21]

Thus Schiller had not counted on a presentation of *Die Räuber,* comforting himself with the thought that, as a closet drama, the play might be somewhat protected from misinterpretation. He preferred to renounce the applause of the theatre for the understanding of the "thoughtful reader."

As Schiller's original preface was not printed, he wrote a second in which, avoiding any offense to the multitude, he pleaded that *Die Räuber* be given a place among the great moral books. He spoke of it as a "dramatic novel"; he was still doubtful as to the possibility of its ever being mounted on a stage. Finally, the Mannheim National Theatre decided to produce it. Prior to the première, Schiller wrote an announcement under the heading: *"Der Verfasser an das Publikum."* Taking pains not to offend anybody, he appealed to the public on its weakest side: "May the spectator weep before the stage today, may he shudder and learn to subject his passions to the laws of religion and reason."[22]

The effect of the play was more powerful than Schiller had

[21] Schiller in his suppressed preface to *Die Räuber, Sämtliche Werke*, Centennial Edition (Stuttgart/Berlin), XVI, 13.

[22] Schiller, *"Avertissement"* for the first performance of *Die Räuber*. *Werke*, Centennial Edition, XVI, 20.

anticipated. The spectators had been moved to tears by Sara Sampson's misfortune and, with horror, had learned something. But they had sat in their stalls "like statues." What a different picture on this memorable evening of January 13, 1782, in Mannheim! Here is the report of an eyewitness:

The theatre was like a madhouse. One saw rolling eyes, clenched fists, and heard hoarse cries in the auditorium. Strangers fell sobbing into each other's arms. Women reeled to the doors almost fainting. There was a general dissolution as if into chaos, from whose mists a new creation is bursting forth.[23]

Die Räuber had rocked the entire structure of rationalistic ethics and esthetics. Dionysos had triumphed over Socrates. In order to find a counterpart to this description of the first night of *Die Räuber,* one must go back to the reports of Greek chroniclers describing the violent effects of classical tragedies, which—legend has it—caused outbursts of madness and premature births. Here was no longer theatre. The footlights had disappeared, and in an uproar against God and temporal justice actors and spectators were fused into a community of intoxicated Dionysians. It sounded like gratitude to these Mannheim enthusiasts, when Schiller, in the preface to his next play, *Fiesco,* wrote one of his lofty passages with which he first established the typical German concept of the theatre's dignity:

Sacred and solemn was always that quiet, that great moment in the theatre, when so many hundreds of hearts vibrated in tune with the phantasy of a poet as if trembling under the omnipotent blow of a magic wand; when, torn away from all masks and out of all hiding places, the natural man listens with an open mind; when I lead the soul of the spectator as if with a bridle, and can throw it like a ball toward heaven or hell as I choose. It is high treason against the genius and against humanity to disregard this happy moment, when so much can be won or lost for the heart.

In so far as they placed any value whatsoever on a performance of their plays, the Storm and Stress dramatists wanted the natural man for a spectator. They had no use for the middle-class man, who was buried under a rubbish heap of conventions.[24] The Storm and Stress movement discarded the ballast of rationalistic esthetics to a certain extent, but on the other hand, it

[23] J. Peterson, *Das deutsche Nationaltheater* (Leipzig 1919), 59.
[24] *Cf.* S. Melchinger, *Dramaturgie des Sturms und Drangs* (Gotha 1929), p. 104.

could not get along without the idea of utility. F. M. Klinger wanted to change the world, as did H. L. Wagner in *Die Kindermörderin,* and, above all, J. M. R. Lenz with his social messages in *Der Hofmeister* and *Die Soldaten.* On this point at least these poets could be just as doctrinaire as Gottsched, and one can easily harvest from *Die Soldaten* or from *Die Kindermörderin,* a single dogma, which Gottsched had expected to abstract from any good tragedy. The fanatical desire of these geniuses to bring about a change of social conditions is based on that optimistic theory of human progress which Nietzsche has pointed out as the characteristic of the Socratic type. They stand in opposition to the Age of Reason only in regard to the artistic means which should be used to make an argument convincing for the spectator.

The Storm and Stress dramatists did not write their plays for actual audiences. The audience was for them no living entity, which the poet had to take into account, but rather an ideal entity, which is to be created only through the particular play in question.[25] When Klinger's *Sturm und Drang* was not enthusiastically received in Frankfort, H. L. Wagner wrote the following lines, which are so typical of the self-esteem of these playwrights:

If I am not mistaken, everything, in this play proceeds very naturally, even though not as things do in everyday life. This is always the great mistake of a dramatic poet who works for an invisible audience. If he is, however, satisfied with the applause of a few sensitive souls scattered in a hundred different places, if he wishes to please only that small invisible group, then perhaps that which angered those other people will become beautiful.[26]

Goethe's mother, an ardent admirer of Shakespeare, was surprised by the success of *Hamlet* in Frankfort. But when she sought to explain this popularity in a letter to the impresario Grossmann, she by no means flattered the Frankfort public, and her observations throw the actual condition of the German theatre audiences into sharp relief:

Curiosity alone impels the citizens of Frankfort to see *Hamlet.* For generally, and with few exceptions, they reason like horses. At a social gathering some days ago, I met a so-called lady of quality, who pronounced her judgment of *Hamlet* as if it were a mere farce. Heaven pre-

[25] *Ibid,* p. 103.

[26] H. L. Wagner, *Briefe, die Seylerische Schauspielergesellschaft und ihre Vorstellungen zu Frankfurt am Main betreffend* (Frankfort 1777).

serve us! *Hamlet* a farce! I thought I would have the vapors on the spot! Another person asserted, and used these very words, that the devil might snatch him if he could not write a thing just as full of nonsense himself, and he was a fat and burly wine merchant. With all our ado about this enlightened age—of course with the exception of a few who are the salt of the earth—everything is so stale, so miserable and dried up in the ladies and gentlemen that they cannot chew and digest a good piece of beef. Cereals, frozen desserts, sweetmeats—that is their sustenance. They upset their stomachs with them more and more, but what can one do about it?[27]

Since this audience had lost its innocence, Hamann called for an audience of "children," of "modest and naïve people," who would still be capable of giving themselves up to impressions without reserve.[28] Lenz wanted the entire populace for an audience, a truly representative national community, which would include the cultured as well as the ignorant. Bürger planned a drama that would be sure of success both in the village tavern and in the court theatre. Dramatic poetry discovered the common man, who was admired for his simplicity. In his *Deutsche Chronik,* Schubart admonished authors to depict scenes from everyday life, and he supported the various attempts to raise the taste of the common man, who until then had had no literary contacts but the Bible. The *Allgemeine deutsche Wochenblatt* wrote in 1774:

The so-called common man merely follows the impressions of nature, and nature can make no mistakes. Hence the sound judgment that the common man usually expresses about things that the so-called esthete more often misinterprets.[29]

Schubart rejoiced over the Berlin première of *Götz.* Even the progressives had doubted that this chronicle play would stand up under a stage test, and when the "beautiful monster" was presented with great applause on six successive days, there was no lack of voices that questioned the honesty of the success. The Prussian court, the Berlin scholars and literati were absolutely spellbound by Paris, and it could not be expected that they, so strongly under the influence of French customs and dramaturgical theories, would enjoy a play that spurned all accepted conventions.

[27] *Die Briefe der Frau Rath Goethe,* ed. A. Köster (Leipzig 1911), I, 45.
[28] Melchinger, *op. cit.,* p. 104.
[29] Quoted by Nollau, *op. cit.,* p. 81.

From contemporary sources we learn that the box-office success of this Storm and Stress classic could be attributed to two factors: on the one hand, the most sensational rumors had been circulated about the character of the play; on the other, the unusual splendor of J. W. Meil's costumes held the spectators spellbound. Nicolai evaluated the *Götz* success fairly objectively when he wrote:

> Perhaps the historically duplicated clothes and armour had as much to do with this success as anything else. . . . The most peculiar thing is that even princesses and courtiers, who are thoroughly French, have attended the *Götz*. . . . The Berlin audience is (as almost all audiences in the world) a many-headed hydra, some of whose heads nourish themselves with the finest juices of the best plants, while the majority feed on thistles and straw.[30]

The heartbeat of the knight with the iron hand was hardly heard by Goethe's contemporaries, but the costuming set a new fashion.

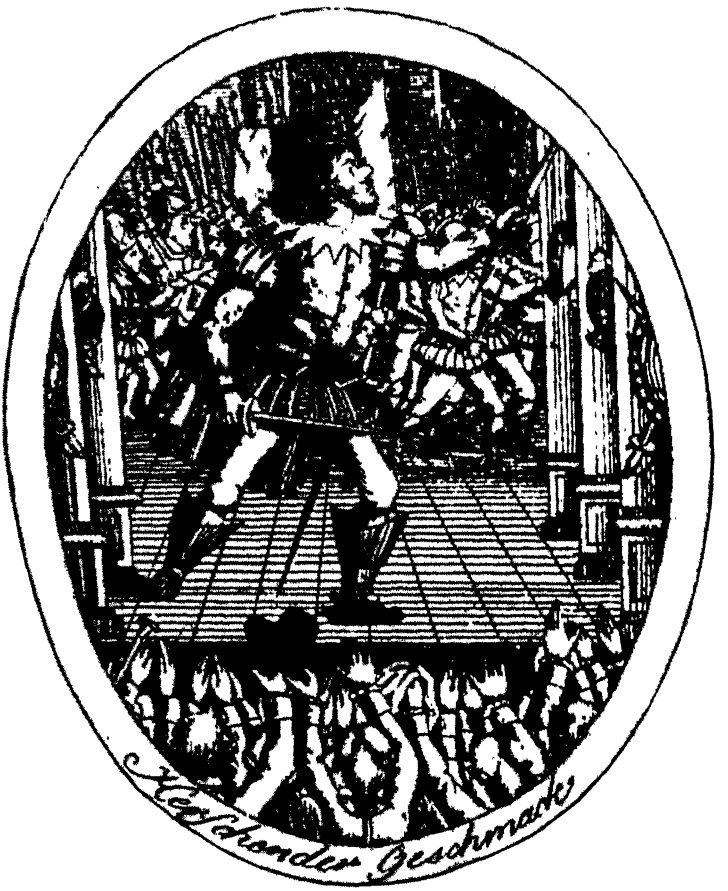
Just as the Storm and Stress dramatists made no secret of their contempt for the enlightened bourgeoisie, so the educated spectator scorned the masses who found boundless pleasure in knightly and robber plays that went into mass production after *Götz* and *Die Räuber*. In the travel letters of Baron Riesbeck, who, under the guise of a Frenchman, sharply criticized his German contemporaries, there is a brilliant characterization of the taste of the pit, which "must have madness and murder and trumpets and thunder."

> It is a fact that the pieces which have most madmen and murderers in them, meet with the greatest approbation; nay, several actors and actresses have complained to me how difficult they found it to invent new ways of dying on the stage. It must be difficult, for there are scenes in which the principal performers must remain for half an hour in the last agonies, uttering broken words, and under continued convulsions, and it is certainly no easy task to sustain such a death with propriety. I have often seen no less than five people at once dying on the German stage. one ringing out his knell with his feet, another with his arms, a third with his belly, and a fourth with his head, whilst the pit seemed agonizing with joy, especially if the sport lasted, and clapped every convulsive movement. . . .[31]

Riesbeck, "the Frenchman," gives a sociological interpretation of the taste of the German masses in these lines:

[30] R. M. Werner, "Die erste Aufführung des Götz von Berlichingen," *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, II (1881), 97.

[31] Baron Riesbeck, *Travels Through Germany in a Series of Letters* (London 1787), I, 65 ff.



AUDIENCE REACTION TO PLAY DONE IN THE PREVAILING POOR TASTE.

The different classes of people do not mingle so much in the German towns as they do in France. To everything, which belongs to nobility or which has the name of nobility or is in any way attached to the court, the German in middle life can have no access. His knowledge of life and taste for social pleasures is much more confined than that of our people, nor does he, like the inhabitants of a moderately large French town, enter into the innumerable incidents and accidents of common life. This want of interest in usual virtues and vices, this insensibility to the little



AND THE SPARSE AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE AT
A PLAY DONE IN GOOD TASTE.

—From a Satirical Print. Mannheim 1795.

events of ordinary life, oblige the German to look for stronger emotions and caricatures to entertain him on the stage: whereas the Frenchman is contented with a piece of a much finer wrought plot, and willingly sees the people he lives and is acquainted with represented on the stage. The Saxon dramas are not so monstrous and extravagant as those which are exhibited in the western and southern parts of Germany, because a more enlightened morality and a freer intercourse than there is here obtained in that part of the country.

If at first the Storm and Stress dramatists had believed that they could forego the applause of the enlightened audience, they soon felt the need for recognition by the educated. Since the latter would not have accepted his *Kindermörderin,* Wagner produced a stage version in which he suppressed the offensive first act and provided a happy ending. With a passing blow at rationalistic prudishness, he wrote in the preface of the stage version that, as things now stood with the audience, only those tragedies were allowed to end with a catastrophe "in which one sees in every scene that it is not serious and that the people on the stage are only dying for fun." The lachrymose stage version contained the following admonition:

Thus it is with the virtue of every girl who goes on sprees with people above her station, and only rarely does one of these girls succeed in getting off with nothing worse than a black eye. Mark this well even though it may be only for the sake of your future daughter!

It is interesting to note that even Wagner's original title had to give way to a weaker one, *Evchen Humbrecht oder Ihr Mütter merkt's Euch,* which was also intended to meet the demands of the Socratic spectator.

The Apollonian Ideal

Influenced by his reading of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* and of Mendelssohn's *Briefe über die Empfindungen,* Schiller's concept of tragedy changed,[32] and in his essays, *Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen* and *Über die tragische Kunst,* he was no longer inclined to see the purpose of artistic activity in teaching and education, but in giving pleasure. In Weimar, under Goethe's influence, he took the last step toward a purified concept of art. His attitude toward the public underwent a complete change. He freed it from any guilt in the decline of art. It is only the artist who "pulls the public down, and in all times when art has declined it has done so through the artists." Schiller now expected nothing but susceptibility from his audience, which he said,

. . . comes before the curtain with a definite demand and with a versatile disposition. It possesses an ability to understand the highest things. It re-

[32] *Cf.* R. Petsch, "Schiller und das Problem des Tragischen," *Gehalt und Form* (Dortmund 1925), pp. 190 ff.

joices in that which is decent and right, and when it has begun to be satisfied with bad things, it will certainly give them up and demand excellence, were it only offered.[33]

The preface to *Die Braut von Messina* is Schiller's esthetic testament. In it the playwright established the theatre as a symbolic institution. Theatrical illusion, as Diderot and Beaumarchais understood it, was to him nothing but a "miserable juggler's deception." He rejected the request that the action on the boards be real, when after all the daylight in the theatre can only be artificial and the architecture symbolic. In order to put the tragic action on an ideal basis and to dismiss finally all ideas of a surface imitation of nature, Schiller decided to introduce again the ancient chorus, which was to him a living wall, built by the tragedy around itself, so as to cut itself off from the real world. He anticipated the discontent of his contemporaries, who grumbled that the chorus was bound to destroy the illusion and prevent the empathy, by stating that in his eyes this very accomplishment of the chorus must serve as its greatest recommendation, "for it is exactly this blind power of emotions which the true artist avoids." When the blows with which the tragedy strikes our hearts follow one another incessantly, we will "identify ourselves with the material and no longer soar above it."

It is just here where the anti-Dionysian task of the chorus begins.[34] With its observations it places itself between the stage action and the spectator, thus preventing him from losing his spiritual freedom in the storm of emotions. Through its presence, moreover, it also restrains the passions of the stage characters, for it represents, as it were, an advance guard of spectators, and the actual spectators in the auditorium receive the action already purified through the filter of the chorus. "The soul of the spectator is to remain free even in the most violent passion." The dramatic piece "is to remain a play and, let it be understood, a poetic one."

Schiller in this way developed the theory of Apollonian enjoyment of dramatic art. He was cured of all Socratic neuroses and returned the theatre, which had to give up its artistic freedom in its struggle for existence, to the realm of the esthetic. A symbolic

[33] From Schiller's preface to *Die Braut von Messina.*

[34] Bert Brecht would say: its "epic" function. Brecht, however, uses the Apollonian means of the chorus to further his Socratic end.

institution superseded a moral one. The new temple of art, which can no longer be confused with church or schoolhouse, now bears the inscription, *Apollini et Musis,* or, as Schiller put it, "all art is dedicated to joy, and there is no higher and more serious task than to make men happy."

The section on Goethe and his Weimar experiment with educated spectators will follow in the next issue of the *Theatre Annual*—Editor.

SAMUEL PHELPS, LAST OF A DYNASTY

by

SHIRLEY S. ALLEN

Samuel Phelps, whom Macready nominated as his successor to leadership of the English stage, is more frequently regarded as a manager who contributed much to stagecraft, or as a pioneer in social betterment who established the first successful people's theatre, rather than as a great actor in the tradition of Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready. Yet the study of Phelps as an actor is peculiarly rewarding because of his position as the last of the old school. As early as 1886, William Archer realized that the passing of Phelps was the passing of more than a famous actor:

> Samuel Phelps was the last, and by no means the least, not only of a generation, but of a dynasty of actors,—the Shakespearean dynasty,—founded by Burbage, and stretching in an unbroken line from Betterton downward. For two hundred years the stage was at no time without its two or three "legitimate" actors,—men who had been trained in the classic drama, who could move with ease and dignity through the whole poetic repertory; to whom the march of sonorous iambics was as little of a mystery as the modulations of the hexameters to the ancient rhapsodists. . . . The race survives in America . . . in the person of Mr. Edwin Booth. Phelps, its last English scion, though he lived to see Mr. Irving almost in the plenitude of his power, would probably have been more at home with Burt and Mohun at the Cockpit than on the Lyceum stage. Betterton, Booth, Quin, Garrick, Kemble, Macready, Phelps,—so run the representative names, the last linked to the first by an unbroken chain of tradition. Phelps trod the stage in the buskin of Burbage; but to whom has he bequeathed it?[1]

Phelps began acting in the days of Edmund Kean, when the memory of the Kembles was still fresh, reached his maturity while Macready was at his height, and remained on the stage after Robertsonian comedy had introduced a new style—in fact, a new theory—of acting, which has become the accepted standard of our own day. He bridges the gap that separates us from the theatre

[1] In *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States*, ed. Brander Matthews and Laurence Hutton (New York 1886), IV, 71-72.

of the early nineteenth century—the theatre that retained traditions of two centuries in acting and repertory, even to details of delivery and stage business. He carried these traditions down to the period which Mr. E. J. West has described as the time of change from a player's to a playwright's theatre.[2] An understanding of Phelps' art will lead to an understanding of the art of Macready, Kean, and their predecessors.

Because Phelps was the last of the old school, a just evaluation of his acting is not easy to obtain. Many descriptions of his later acting were written by critics who belonged to the new age, an age inclined to dismiss him as old-fashioned. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson recorded an instance of this prejudice when he described the attitude of five or six prominent actors of London during the 'seventies. They considered Phelps out of date although they had never seen him act; but after they had been persuaded to attend his performance of Wolsey, they drastically revised their opinion.[3]

Even the reviews of Phelps' acting at the height of his career cannot be accepted without qualification, because as manager of Sadler's Wells he was in a sense the leader of a crusade, liable to the overenthusiastic praise of his followers, and, as a suburban actor, often underrated through the snobbery of the West End theatre. So there is a great difference between the opinion expressed by *Punch* and *The Times*. For *Punch* was a supporter of Phelps at Sadler's Wells whereas *The Times* was a partisan of Charles Kean at the rival and fashionable Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street. *The Athenaeum*, the *Examiner*, and the *Morning Advertiser* were less prejudiced, but no critic entirely escaped the influence of the circumstances.

A third difficulty in judging Phelps' art arises from a personal idiosyncrasy—the habit of under-playing his parts on opening nights to avoid the risk of failure through nervousness. Therefore the same critic may offer decidedly different opinions of his acting in a single role. *The Athenaeum*, with rare restraint, withheld judgment upon his first appearance in *John Bull*, saying that "it was the first night of the play; and Mr. Phelps has been frequently inferior on first nights in characters in which subse-

[2] E. J. West, "From a Player's to a Playwright's Theatre: The London Stage, 1870-1890," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXVIII (1942), 430-436.

[3] Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, *A Player under Three Reigns* (Boston 1925), pp. 69-70.

quently he has won a distinguished reputation."[4] If in an evaluation of Phelps these things are kept in mind, the great divergence of opinion in contemporary accounts is not so bewildering, and from the large quantity of material a fair estimate can be constructed.

There can be no doubt of the soundness of Phelps' training. At the age of twenty he began at the bottom—as a Walking Gentleman in a stock company. From 1828 until 1837 he worked for managers of various provincial circuits, playing all stock roles, tragic and comic. During this apprenticeship he acquired the elements of the traditional actor's art: good elocution, the customary "points" of well-known parts with their accepted stage business. When he made his London debut as Shylock in August 1837, he was a competent actor. "The moment he entered on the scene," wrote a reviewer in *The Times,* "you could discern the practised actor ripe for judgment, and he might have been certain of a favorable reward even from a Daniel."[5]

The estimate of Phelps' acting that emerges from the study of this and other contemporary accounts establishes him first of all as a traditional actor. In style, he was nearer to Macready than to anyone else. Partly because they were products of the same age, and partly because Phelps, during his first six years in London, was associated with Macready, their ideals and techniques were similar. Both sought for complete and consistent conception of a character, with less emphasis upon "points" than was characteristic of Kean and Kemble. Both were admired for their expression of the "domestic passions" (as in the agony of Virginius over his daughter's fate or the paternal side of Lear) and for their portrayal of the oversensitive man warped and embittered by hidden sorrow. And both depended upon the technique of abrupt transition from one mood to another. Both were described as "intellectual" actors and both concentrated on spiritual suggestion, unlike the Kembles, who analyzed the external rather than the internal aspects of character. But where Macready was sometimes accused of substituting psychological subtlety for passion, Phelps was inclined to substitute pathos. One critic characterized Macready as the "head" and Phelps as the "heart."

[4] *The Athenaeum,* 1859 (2), p. 409.

[5] Quoted in W. M. Phelps and Johnston Forbes-Robertson, *The Life and Life-Work of Samuel Phelps* (London 1886), p. 44.

This difference was demonstrated most vividly when, in 1837 at the beginning of Phelps' career in London, he alternated with Macready the roles of Othello and Iago at Covent Garden. The audience's reception of Phelps' Othello convinced Macready that the newcomer was a dangerous rival, and wishing to preserve his unquestioned leadership on the stage, he withdrew Phelps from "leading business." Two years later, however, at the Haymarket Phelps again alternated the two roles with Macready, and this time Macready's discomfiture, which is recorded in his diary, was evident to the critics.[6] In Iago Macready clearly had the advantage, through the psychological subtlety of his interpretation: Phelps' Iago was a "laughing bold devil" without the intellectual superiority of Macready's.[7] But in Othello Phelps' acting possessed a power and sincerity which captured the sympathy of the audience, and he was called before the curtain in a burst of enthusiasm, while Macready was for the moment forgotten. Two characteristics of Phelps' early performance of Othello—unusual energy in passionate scenes, and the rare gift of attracting sympathy by giving a conviction of sincerity—remained throughout his career the chief reasons for his popularity. Towse, the American critic, wrote of the "imposing outbursts of passion and moments of melting pathos" in the Othello of Phelps' later years.[8]

Again it was Macready who unintentionally gave Phelps the opportunity to exhibit the power that had already reminded critics of the late Edmund Kean when he turned over to Phelps the role of Lord Tresham in Browning's *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.* Instead of the failure feared by Macready, the play was an immediate success, chiefly because of Phelps' compelling performance. "Stimulated by this opportunity," Westland Marston wrote, "Phelps went beyond himself. In the recoil of the rash brother from the dishonour of his house, he seemed as one *possessed* by passion." The *Morning Post* said that "the actor was forgotten in the terrible truth of his fiery utterance."[9]

But the opportunities for such display of power were few, and during most of his six years under Macready, Phelps was forced

[6] *The Diaries of William Charles Macready,* ed. William Toynbee (London 1912), II, 23; *Dramatic and Musical Review,* VII (1848), 130.

[7] *The Theatrical Journal,* VI (1845), 173.

[8] J. Ranken Towse, *Sixty Years of the Theater* (New York and London 1916), p. 43.

[9] Westland Marston, *Our Recent Actors* (Boston 1888), II, 17; Phelps and Robertson, *op. cit.,* p. 56.

to show his ability through the skilled use of pathos in minor parts. In his hands Macduff became an important character, with emphasis upon the feelings of the father and husband when his family is murdered. Commenting upon his Hubert in Macready's *King John, The Times* called him "an actor with more manly pathos than any on the stage," and the *Morning Post* said, "He is one of the few living men who touch our hearts, and this, not by loud words and hurried delivery and strong tones (although his strength is plentiful), but . . . by the only magic that can do so—the strong persuasion that his grief or passion is actually grappling with the very roots of his own heart."[10]

When Phelps became the manager of Sadler's Wells in 1844, he was free to assume the leading roles Macready had denied him; and during the following decade both actors could be seen and compared by London audiences as nearly all of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. Now that a complete and fair estimate of Phelps' abilities could be made, it became clear that, although he surpassed Macready in emotional force, he lacked the dignity and refinement which were among Macready's best qualities. Thus as Lear he was much more the father than the king; his bearing, according to Marston, lacked authority, and Henry Morley complained that he missed "the majesty of absolute dominion in the royal Lear."[11] In no character was this deficiency more noticeable than in his Coriolanus, a part still connected with the name of Kemble. Phelps was praised for the vigor and passionate impatience of his interpretation, but compared with Kemble he was found to be too impetuous and lacking in lofty disdain.

Of the grace and romantic ardor necessary for a Romeo or an Antony, Phelps had almost none. When *Romeo and Juliet* was presented at Sadler's Wells, he chose Mercutio for himself; and in portraying Antony he emphasized the mental struggle between an enthralling passion and a declining sense of honor rather than the passion itself. He never achieved the elegance of the Kemble school or the polish of Macready in such drawing-room characters as Sir Peter Teazle, Lord Ogleby in *The Clandestine Marriage*, and Dr. Cantwell in *The Hypocrite* (*Le Tartuffe*).

It is not the least of Phelps' virtues as an actor that he never

[10] *The Times*, October 25, 1842, and the *Morning Post* quoted in Phelps and Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

[11] Marston, *op. cit.*, II, 19; Henry Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer* (London 1891), p. 225.

totally failed in a part and sometimes even achieved great popularity in a role seemingly unsuited to him. This may be attributed to the two best qualities of his acting: a thoroughly understood and complete interpretation of every character, and a masterful reading of lines. Wholeness of conception is a phrase frequently applied to him. In his first season at Sadler's Wells, the striking consistency of his Hamlet drew the applause of critics:

> His plan is the only right one—he goes on a regular system, and does not lay himself out for applause at the sacrifice of truth, and clearly studies all parts of his dialogue before acting it, and carefully avoids the evil of making as many points of the part as he can.[12]

Another critic, Herbert Steele, said, "He presents Hamlet, in its artistic *ensemble, better* than any actor I ever saw."[13] This domination of the total conception over every individual part of his interpretation demanded a kind of self-denial which we today might not understand. This won him high praise from such discriminating critics as Tomlins, who said of his Macbeth that it was "conceived in the highest poetry,—with no 'false starts,' no pointed ranting, no misdirected energy that fires the unreflecting many into sudden admiration."[14]

Phelps' best physical asset was his deep, resonant, and extremely powerful voice, capable of expressing the entire range of emotion. To this natural advantage, he added a lifetime of training in elocution. Although he had gained technical mastery of tone and enunciation, he still sought constantly for perfection in details of emphasis and phrasing. His ability to read lines with subtlety, precision, and a sense of poetry saved his least successful roles from failure and gave to his best that conviction of sincerity which stirred the sympathy of his hearers. The art of elocution, which provided the basis for the traditional style, has been lost since the days of Phelps, and we cannot today fully understand its nature.

All these qualities of Phelps were mirrored in his production of *Macbeth* in 1847. Every detail was planned for the purpose of presenting the total effect of the original Shakespearean version, which, purged of D'Avenant's alterations, was presented for the first time since the seventeenth century. And to this purpose

[12] *The Theatrical Journal,* VI (1845), 173.
[13] Phelps and Robertson, *op. cit.,* pp. 216-217.
[14] Quoted *ibid.,* p. 98.

Phelps' acting of Macbeth contributed as much, perhaps, as the elimination of the singing witches. In creating a consistent character he followed Macready's method; but he differed from Macready, who was sometimes criticized for burying the impulse of the character under psychological subtleties, in the rugged power of his interpretation. His Macbeth was a fierce and resolute warrior, less dignified and gentlemanly than Macready's famous portrayal, and less pathetic and imaginative than Booth's later interpretation. He never collapsed completely, even after the murder or after the apparition of Banquo's Ghost, and he displayed more horror than terror in the dagger scene. He was always the bold and ambitious man, only temporarily unnerved and shaken. Even his fits of sullen despondency showed remorse without any coloring of sentimentality, and his imperious tone in speaking to the witches avoided any impression of subservience to them. Critics commented upon the tremendous physical strength required to carry out this powerful delineation, and marveled that he was able to achieve the final scene with undiminished force.

Perhaps Phelps' Macbeth cannot be ranked with the greatest interpretations of the part, because of its lack of intellectual subtleties, accumulation of detail, and flashes of inspiration that distinguish genius, but it was unsurpassed in wholeness and fidelity of conception, in physical vigor, and in skilled declamation. Most critics agreed with Tomlins that it was close to Shakespeare's intention.[15]

Phelps' provincial reputation, his debut at the Haymarket, his years under Macready, and the first seasons at Sadler's Wells had established him as a tragedian. It was not, however, until 1846, when he assumed the part of Falstaff in his production of *King Henry IV, Part I,* that he gave the first indication of the versatility which was to become a chief characteristic of his talent. This first essay in comedy was a peculiarly difficult one, for temperamentally and physically Phelps was not well suited to Falstaff. He had very little of the self-enjoyment and the quality actors call "unction," which are usually associated with the character. His success was the triumph of intelligence over material difficulties. He studied the character carefully and gave an unusual but consistent interpretation, emphasizing the lively in-

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

tellect rather than the sensuality of Falstaff. He substituted a dry, caustic shrewdness and a self-possessed effrontery for the traditional kind of humor. This new interpretation did not please those who missed the "oleaginous" Falstaff to whom they had become accustomed, but its skilful execution commanded the admiration of many critics.

The next season Phelps continued his experiment in comic acting with Jacques in *As You Like It*. But it was his Malvolio, of the same year, that established him as one of the best comedians on the stage. His success depended upon an ability to disguise himself in the character he was creating. So completely was every facial expression, gesture, and bodily movement controlled to this end that the audience did not recognize him in Malvolio until he spoke; and he was apparently unconscious of the audience, never attempting to make a point, never interfering with the essential humor of the character by obvious comedy. His interpretation was the embodiment of colossal conceit, based upon Olivia's words: "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio." He carried himself with the frozen calm of self-esteem that could neither be thawed by courtesy nor shattered by attack. Instead of the smirk and comic strut of other stage Malvolios, Phelps walked in the heaviness of grandeur with a face that was gravely serious through sheer emptiness of expression. The Fool's disrespect moved him to express a passing shade of pity; Sir Toby and Sir Andrew merited only calm disdain; and even when bidden to smile (as he thought) by his mistress, he only produced a smile of intense satisfaction with himself. He accepted his lady's love with approval of her good judgment rather than with gratefulness. When at the end he was at last convinced that he had been made a fool of, despair came over him momentarily, and the struggle to retain his dignity was most eloquently displayed in his face. But almost at once his sense of self-importance reasserted itself and he uttered his final threat with dignified contempt.

A few years later, in 1853, Phelps achieved the remarkable *tour de force* of playing both Justice Shallow and the King in *King Henry IV, Part II*. Reviewers said that his performance displayed more than the superficial versatility which enables an actor to change appearance and manner from one character to the next. He seemed to live in each character: to be a king of

royal dignity and energetic mind; to be also the senile, pompous, and small-minded Shallow. The source of this ability, according to several perceptive critics, was to be found in his reading of the lines. Towse spoke of the melody, imagination, and pictorial power in his reading of the invocation to sleep, and attributed the vitalization of Shakespearean humor in Shallow's lines to the unfailing ingenuity with which Phelps had solved the puzzles of the dialogue, giving it cohesion and sequence. Marston said that "the various phrases of the man—his dreary libertine vaunts, his clinging to life and yearning for distraction against ugly thoughts, and the overdone merriment which could not cloak his apprehensions—were delivered with that ease and precision of expression —just to the finest *nuance*—which he had so happily cultivated in comedy."[16]

By 1862, when Phelps left Sadler's Wells, his reputation as an actor rested upon a wide variety of roles. Whether he was the better actor in tragedy or comedy was a question frequently debated, with critical opinion almost equally divided. But one thing is clear: if Phelps ever displayed genius he did so in two comic roles—Shakespeare's Bottom and Macklin's Sir Pertinax Macsycophant. These two interpretations showed an originality of conception and a mastery of execution that place them among the greatest achievements of the stage.

According to *Punch,* Bottom was "translated" by Phelps, "translated from matter-of-fact into poetic humour; translated from the common tradition of the play-house to a thing subtly grotesque—rarely, and heroically whimsical."[17] His characterization began with a lifelike and credible man, not the usual Bottom who solicited laughter by the make-up and gestures of a clown. In the first scene Phelps depicted the ignorant and stupid weaver, dominated by self-importance and marked by large angular gestures. He was the master of his companions, a position maintained through the force of his dogmatism, which they accepted for superior intelligence. Always earnest and intent upon distinguishing himself, he made the play a serious and important business, because *he* was to appear before the Duke. Through this interpretation the rehearsal scenes provided pure comedy, without a trace of buffoonery in the acting.

[16] Towse, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Marston, *op. cit.*, II, 31-32.
[17] *Punch,* XXV (1853), 165.

It was in the fairy scenes that this Bottom became one of the most imaginative impersonations ever seen on the stage. His gesticulating arms were still, his restlessness subsided, and he accepted the ass's head quietly. The head itself is described in a letter written by Phelps to his wife when he was playing the part at Liverpool: "I am very glad I have brought the Donkey's head, for though they have a new one it is not good—it is a most *impudent* looking ass instead of the *stupid* sleek thing it should be for Bottom—it looks impossible that it should *sleep*."[18] Phelps' portrayal of Bottom did give the impression of sleeping. He was completely incorporated in the midsummer night's dream, but lost none of the qualities of an ass. Fortified by his conceit, he accepted the love of Titania without wonder, as something sweet and pleasant. The humor of these scenes was increased by the movements of the donkey's ears, mouth, and head, which Phelps manipulated with his hands folded quietly upon his breast. Upon Bottom's awakening, Phelps raised him for just a moment above the ridiculous. As he tried to recollect his dream, the mystery of it clung to him and echoed in his voice, silencing the audience's laughter while he spoke: "I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. . . ."

When Phelps first produced Macklin's *The Man of the World* in 1851, the *Dramatic and Musical Review* summed up his acting of Macsycophant in these words: "For a thoroughly artistic conception in all its details nothing like it has been seen for some time."[19] He was still playing the part in 1877, and the memory of it lasted until 1915, when Barnes, the actor, wrote, "I have no kind of hesitation in stating that my very biggest memories are Ristori's Elizabeth and Phelps's Sir Pertinax Macsycophant."[20] The character of Macsycophant, which was created by an actor, gives unusual opportunity for presenting an elaborately detailed and highly colored stage portrait; and attention to detail, as we have seen, was the talent which Phelps had specially cultivated in comedy. Morley said of the performance:

> Sir Pertinax Macsycophant . . . is represented by the actor even in what must pass for the repose of his face when on the stage. The features are cunningly hardened; the keen eyes, and a certain slight but frequent

[18] Unpublished letter, dated April 21, 1867, in the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[19] *Dramatic and Musical Review*, XI (1852), 42.
[20] J. H. Barnes, *Forty Years on the Stage* (New York 1915), p. 137.

turn of the head, with its ready ear and fixed averted face, shrewdly suggests an intent, secret watchfulness.[21]

The explanation of the profound impression which Phelps made upon his audience in this part must be sought, however, in something beyond details of artistry. Critics felt an underlying seriousness, conveyed not by any lapse from the comedy of the role but by the very completeness of the characterization. Towse spoke of the "terrible reality" which was combined with its humor, and Morley said, "If the house roars with laughter at the littleness of the passion, it has to note with a more silent and more powerful emotion its intensity." The mean and selfish worldliness of Macsycophant became in Phelps' portrayal not merely a ridiculous human weakness but a tragic passion. By displaying the whole range of one fault, he achieved something like tragic intensity, without ever abandoning the comic spirit.

In 1862, Phelps gave up the management of Sadler's Wells, and during his remaining fifteen years acted in the West End of London. From 1862 until 1870, he was the main attraction at Drury Lane. This period of his career, in which he played at a traditionally "national" theatre, reaching a large metropolitan audience, and achieving a widespread reputation, has often served as the basis for judgments of his talent and competence as an actor. As we have noted earlier, many critics were now seeing him for the first time and naturally viewed him far differently from the critics of the older generation. These younger men were not only looking at a man nearly sixty years old but looking at him through eyes unaccustomed to his style of acting.

Phelps had for many years been outside the main current of theatrical development. His suburban theatre, described as early as 1844 as a temple consecrated to the legitimate drama in the "remote waste of Islington,"[22] was twenty years later even more remote in dramatic style and repertory than in physical distance from the centre of the London theatre. The old repertory had gradually disappeared from the stage and had been replaced by the plays of Boucicault, Planché, Buckstone, and Jerrold—the forms of drama formerly called illegitimate and restricted by law and custom to "minor" theatres. And with the new plays had come a style of acting—the style of Vestris and Mathews, of Céleste

[21] Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
[22] *Punch*, VII (1844), 32.

and Mrs. Yates, which stemmed from the acting in burlesque and melodrama imported from the Continent. The completeness of this revolution in style was made manifest by the appearance of Fechter as Hamlet in 1861, which caused a violent controversy in the theatrical world; for the two types of acting had up to Fechter's time been kept separate—"naturalistic" or melodramatic style for contemporary plays and the old elevated style for traditional repertory.

Most of the audience, however, who gathered at Drury Lane in October 1862 to see Phelps in Byron's *Manfred*, had become accustomed to the newer type of drama and to them Phelps was as much a ghost out of the past as was the play, which had not been performed since 1834; and the reviews of his performance are frequently more illuminating for a study of theatrical taste than of his acting. *Manfred* was a good choice for his re-entry into the London theatre, because the absence of dramatic action in the play concentrates attention upon the poetry, and its effectiveness depends upon sustained declamation. The play, therefore, drew attention to the quality of Phelps' acting that younger critics could find most satisfactory. That such a play—recommended by Morley as "an antidote to some faults in the taste of the day"[23]—should fill Drury Lane for nearly a hundred nights is striking testimony to the excellence of Phelps' elocution.

An important question may be raised here concerning Phelps' acting in his later years: Was his style the same as it had been in the 'forties when he was compared with Macready, Kean, and Kemble? A careful reading of reviews describing his performances during the last years at Sadler's Wells gives clear evidence of some change in his style of acting tragedy—a tendency to be more "natural" or "familiar" than he had been in earlier years. This change may be partly attributed to the influence of his own acting in comedy, where his new conception of character necessitated the obliteration of traditional points and stage effects. So his Mercutio, as early as 1846, made the Queen Mab speech a part of the dialogue rather than the oration it had always been. His Jacques of the following year was played in a natural, easy style, uninterrupted by the set speeches playgoers had come to expect. It may also be assumed that his tragic style reflected the tendency toward naturalism and realism which may be noted

[23] Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

in aspects of nineteenth-century taste not connected with the theatre.

His Hamlet in 1844, which showed evidences of careful reworking, was called "an exceedingly natural impersonation, without exaggeration of manner," and in 1858, the epithet "natural" was applied to his acting in Penruddock, specifically in contrast to the "classical elevation" of Kemble.[24] In 1861, *The Athenaeum* recognized in his Hamlet that "Mr. Phelps's style has of late changed for the better."[25] Whether the change was truly an improvement is open to question, for, although it was well received, it evidently suffered the loss of much that was best in Phelps' acting. *The Athenaeum's* further description of his new style reveals the critic's prejudices and the actor's deficiencies:

> It is much less declamatory and irregular than it used to be, and he cultivates more the softer tones of his voice. It may be objected that his present subdued style is not so salient as his more demonstrative manner; . . . but it is perfectly consistent with taste and judgment.

The discovery that Phelps' acting at Drury Lane in 1863 was not the same as when he had last appeared there in 1843, must not lead us to the assumption that he was no longer a traditional actor. Conclusive evidence to the contrary may be found in the comparisons of his Othello with that of Fechter while both actors were playing the part in 1861.[26] Phelps used a more natural manner than was customary whenever he thought the situation did not demand elevation of style; but in the senate, on guard, and in public generally, his Othello maintained a dignity of bearing and speech that contrasted sharply with Fechter's alternations between commonplace familiarity and melodramatic violence. In fact, Fechter's comparative failure in this role set off the finest qualities of Phelps' acting according to the reviewers, who pointed out the superior ease and power of his style. Especially in the last three acts, where passion predominates, he had great advantages over Fechter, who played them with a rapid and rather casual manner and was evidently embarrassed by the heightened tone of the language in such speeches as Othello's farewell to his occupation. Phelps, on the contrary, excelled in these passages. Tomlins said:

[24] *The Athenaeum*, 1844, p. 718; 1858 (2), p. 805.

[25] *Ibid.*, 1861 (2), p. 517.

[26] *Cf.* the reviews of the *Morning Advertiser* and the *Daily Telegraph* quoted in Phelps and Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-201; and of *Punch*, XLI (1861), 194.

The great and pathetic speech of the farewell to his occupation was given with consummate art and force, and the images rose one after the other into a grand climax, till they were all scattered by the last despairing line. This mixture of elocutionary power and deep feeling Mr. Phelps is probably the only man on our stage who can properly render; and it is the perfection of his art.[27]

Phelps' tragic style in his later years, which was still traditional though somewhat modified by the taste for naturalness, satisfied the older critics. Tomlins, who had seen "every actor of note, from Edmund Kean in his earliest time," found his Othello of 1864 purged of all mere stage effects—"the last lingering bursts of the great Kean, who invented them; the gurgling spasms wherewith Macready expressed his agonies"—and acted like a grand piece of music played flowingly: "He has moulded the conception in his intellect until it comes pure and perfect from him; and the portrait, a whole-length one, is complete in all its grandeur."[28] But Sir Theodore Martin, who had first come to London in 1846, expressed the view of the younger critics when he described Phelps' Macbeth of the same year as ignoble, unmannerly, and loud. He criticized the actor for strutting, shouting, and playing tricks with his voice, remarking that "he speaks as no man ever spoke in real life."[29] Martin was one of many who, looking for naturalism on the stage, found Phelps' style very unnatural.

That such objection to his acting lay in the "mannerism" of his tragic style is clearly shown by the praise which these same critics awarded to his comic roles, where he had abandoned tradition. Thus Dutton Cook, who censured him for "lacing the buskin too tight," pronounced him without equal in eccentric characters.[30] And Clement Scott, who said, "If I were to be shot for it to-morrow I should not care to see ever again his Hamlet or Othello," admired his Malvolio and Bottom.[31]

Phelps' last long engagement in London was in 1875 at the Gaiety, where he played Cardinal Wolsey in *King Henry the Eighth*. He was supported by a group of actors gathered from several rival theatres since no single theatre now possessed an entire company of Shakespearean actors. The result was a pro-

[27] *Morning Advertiser*, quoted in Phelps and Robertson, p. 198.
[28] Quoted *ibid.*, p. 296.
[29] Sir Theodore Martin, *Essays on the Drama* (London 1874), p. 200.
[30] Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play* (London 1883), I, 84-85.
[31] *The Theatre*, VIII [N. S.] (1886), 332.

duction lacking cohesion and balance. As one reviewer commented: "With the exception of one part superbly played, and one or two others which are respectably supported, the performance is unintelligent and of small account."[32] The "one part superbly played" served to remind the younger generation that Phelps' talent, which had for several years been confined to comedy, could also be displayed in more serious roles. Moy Thomas, writing in *The Academy* on November 27, 1875, carefully described the qualities of Phelps' Wolsey which made it the last personation of its kind on the English stage.

Although Thomas characterized Phelps as a traditional actor, he made a clear distinction between his acting and that of other surviving representatives of the old school, whose outbursts of elocution and picturesque action offended the new taste. Phelps' ability to convey subtle meaning and deep emotion through shades of emphasis is not to be confused, in Thomas's opinion, with the "conventional" and "spurious" art of elocution practised by such an actor as Ryder. In Phelps' performance Wolsey's fall is seen as if from within the character himself, an effect gained through imagination and the subtlest resources of the actor's art. He has the "nice shades of pressure throughout his sentences, which give to his utterances that quality which is known as 'speaking in earnest.'" This sincerity cannot be achieved, however, merely by casting off tradition. Thomas predicted that when the relief of finding an actor like Irving, who had discarded the conventional modes of stage expression, wore off, "it will be seen how greatly deficient he is in the quality of tone and emphasis so managed as to touch the heart and imagination of his hearers." Phelps, a thorough master of the art of reading lines, "is not even approached by any living rival . . . in the sovereign quality of sincerity of utterance."

Phelps' utterance then, which we may call elocution, was the greatest distinction of his acting in the latter years of his career. There is abundant evidence that he was the last important English actor with the training and skill demanded by this lost art. "There is no one now on the stage," stated Percy Fitzgerald in 1895, "his equal for giving weight and point to a sentence, which came out clean and emphatic, firm as from a mould."[33] Dutton

[32] Joseph Knight, *Theatrical Notes* (London 1893), p. 76.
[33] Percy Fitzgerald, *Memoirs of an Author* (London 1895), I, 347-348.

Cook speaks of the contemporary manner of reading Shakespeare "with the haste and unintelligence of a schoolboy hurrying over the recital of a lesson,"[34] and as early as 1849 the *Stage Manager* had complained of Helena Faucit that "she has almost neglected elocution, like the generality of the modern school, who seem to think it beneath them to learn how to read."[35]

Two other qualities of Phelps' acting which Thomas discerned in the Wolsey of 1875 should also be mentioned. One was "command of attitude and gesture, soberly and moderately used." Attitude and gesture, like elocution, had almost disappeared by 1875, and most critics, unlike Thomas, found little to admire in Phelps' stage manner. The second was proportion—the consistent design that governed all Phelps' actions and speech so that gestures and tones were employed only as part of the whole, and not for display. "A performance like that of Mr. Phelps in the part of Wolsey," Thomas asserted, "is set, like a piece of music, in a certain key, and all its parts stand in some relation to each other."

We are fortunate to have this detailed analysis of Phelps' acting in 1875. It was only two years later, when he was playing Wolsey at the Aquarium Theatre, that, struggling against an illness which was soon to prove fatal, he collapsed and was carried off the stage. Thomas's criticism leads one to agree with William Archer that Phelps' death marked the end of a dynasty.

[34] Cook, *op. cit.*, II, 64.
[35] *Stage Manager*, I (1849), 60.

AMERICA'S OLDEST LIVING THEATRE—THE HOWARD ATHENAEUM

by

JOHN WOODRUFF

Rome may point with pride to her Coliseum,
But Boston has the Howard Athenaeum.
Advertising slogan

I suppose no one today can remember the Old Howard's palmy days. During his long career on the stage the late Otis Skinner played in nearly every important theatre in America. But, in spite of the fact that in his youth he had worshipped at William Warren's feet at the Boston Museum and had later appeared with Joe Jefferson and Edwin Booth, he never knew that all three had acted at the Old Howard. "When I was a boy in Boston," he told me, "the Howard was considered not quite respectable."

How surprised he would have been to learn that here Booth's talented but eccentric father, Junius Brutus Booth, the great Macready, the lusty Forrest, and Boston's Charlotte Cushman once played regularly in Shakespeare; that here Warren, the city's most beloved comedian, made his Boston debut in 1846 and Fechter his last appearance on any stage in 1879; that here Bostonians saw Italian opera for the first time, paying five dollars for fifty-cent seats to listen to the rich, voluptuous singing of Fortunata Tedesco in *Ernani*; that here Anna Bishop performed such male roles as Otello and Tancredi "in a manner that excited wonder and admiration"; that here the notorious Lola Montez captivated hard-bitten Yankees by her beauty and contortions in the Spider Dance; that here Mrs. John Wood sang into history Dan Emmett's minstrel song, *Dixie,* and Fanny Davenport made her debut at the age of six months, being wheeled on stage in a baby carriage. Furthermore, how surprised he would have been to learn that for almost ten years, until the opening of the Boston Theatre in 1854, the Old Howard was the finest playhouse in the city and that under the management of Edward

L. Davenport, Fanny's father, its stock company was probably the best that Boston has known.

Yet the Old Howard, whose name has been carried by sailors to every port, does not owe its world-wide renown to its illustrious past. Its popularity is based solidly on the present. There is a long-standing custom that no college student in New England has earned his diploma until he has witnessed here at least one burlesque show, and the theatre has always been frequented by Harvard men. In 1845, when the dainty Mary Anne Lee danced on the stage of the first Old Howard, introducing Giselle to America, Harvard students in their enthusiasm unharnessed the horses from Miss Lee's carriage and themselves drew her in triumph through the streets to her hotel. Later they did the same for Fanny Davenport and for Julia Dean.

The theatre's popularity year after year is amazing. If asked for an explanation, the management would no doubt cite the theatre's slogan, "Always something doing 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.," and point to the program to prove it. Eighty-three years ago the Old Howard bade adieu to the legitimate drama and announced a policy of variety. At that time a bulletin listing Boston's places of entertainment described the theatre as ably managed and well patronized. "One peculiar feature at this theatre is that the curtain never drops, one act succeeding another without intermission until the close of the performance."[1] Truly, since 1867 there has always been something going on at the Old Howard.

Over the years, its programs of variety have shown little alteration. The art of Ann Corio and Gypsy Rose Lee had its ancestry in the living statues of 1847, called "The Model Artists," and the fad among actresses for playing Romeo with their petticoats tucked into the top of their tights. John L. Sullivan and Jack Dempsey, both of whom appeared at the Howard, were the natural inheritors of the drawing qualities of Herr Cline, who in 1848 walked a wire from the stage to the gallery; Herr Driesbach with his performing lions and leopards; Herr Kist, who promised to "break a solid rock of granite into shattered fragments by a blow with his naked fist"; and the perennial extravaganzas of J. S. Jones, such as *Captain Lascar.*

This last was brought out at the Howard after much preparation and a flourish of trumpets on Monday evening, December 17 [1866]. The stage

[1] J. A. T. Bird and A. G. Tuttle, *The Diagram* (Boston [1869]), p. 27.

was said to have been entirely remodelled for its production, and one of the features to which especial attention was called was the absence of the usual "wings" on the sides of the stage. Incidental to the drama was a piece of realism on which extraordinary stress was laid. This was the bombardment of an edifice by real howitzers, which quite threw into the shade all the "real pump" effects that had ever been tried upon our boards.[2]

Popular taste has dictated the nature of the offerings at the Howard, and the theatre has grown old taking good care that it remain popular, although its audience has changed greatly since the days of its youth.

Widespread is the tale that the Old Howard, today the home of burlesque, was once a church—a tale supported by its churchly façade of grim granite dominated by Gothic windows. There is, however, no truth to the story. The theatre has been confused with the first Howard Athenaeum, which had a short but interesting life.

William Miller stopped off in Boston in the winter of 1839 to warn its citizens of the approach of the Day of Judgment. He predicted that

> The end of the world will surely be
> In Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Three.

Young Thomas Ford had at that time just come up to the city from Marshfield, planning to follow in the path of Julienne, the fashionable restaurateur, and looking ahead with confidence. Ford's notions of eternity could hardly be expected to agree with those of Miller and his followers. So while others were selling their businesses in preparation for doomsday, Tom had the enterprise to announce his restaurant.

His avocation was theatricals. He served oysters to the rival companies of the Eagle, National, and Tremont theatres each evening and closed up in time to join some of his friends among the supernumeraries on stage. Three years later he had done well enough with his oysters to be able to invest in a tabernacle for the Millerites and dream of managing it as a theatre after they conceded defeat.

The day of reckoning came and passed, and by 1844 William Miller was a disillusioned man. But, though the world did not end, two of Boston's theatres did. In March 1843 the Eagle had failed, and in June the Tremont had been sold and converted

[2] Unidentified clipping in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

into a church. William Pelby's National exercised a virtual monopoly, presenting gaudy spectacles, with only the Boston Museum (which combined the presentation of plays with exhibitions of stuffed birds, Indians, freaks, and moving dioramas) as a competitor. The time was ripe for a new theatre.

A group of unemployed actors, William Ayling among them, gathered in Ford's restaurant, seeking financial help and business leadership from the proprietor. Ford, glad to have the backing of the "profession," agreed to convert the Millerite Tabernacle into a theatre. It was under these circumstances that the Howard Athenaeum came to open its doors on October 13, 1845, with Ford as manager of the theatre and Ayling in charge of the company. The audience flocked into the former tabernacle to enjoy a performance of *The School for Scandal,* admission being fifty cents to all parts of the house.

The theatre was on Howard Street. Tom Ford, who had named his oyster house Ford's Restorator, was similarly inspired when he called his theatre The Howard Athenaeum. The Tabernacle was a large, rickety, wooden building. At one point in its construction, the mayor of Boston had been forced to warn the builders that while he had no objection to a front that leaned in, it must not be permitted to lean out. After the Howard opened, a play reviewer wrote that during a performance rain had come through the roof in such quantity that it might have been well to "have opened an umbrella." Clearly, the contractors, whether Millerites or not, had not built for posterity. The first season there under Ford, eighty-nine different pieces were presented. Ballet and English opera were the favorites, among them being *Giselle* with Miss Lee and the first Boston performance of *The Bohemian Girl,* which was such a hit that for a time everyone went about humming Balfe's aria, *I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls.*

On February 23, 1846, just after the audience had left the building, flames broke out on stage. The play had been *Pizarro* in which a ball of fire is supposed to descend from the flies—the heavens, that is. It had done so with disastrous results. In about twenty minutes the entire structure was in ruins.

Ford, Ayling, and the others saw their venture literally go up in smoke. It was a sobering experience, but the short season had been long enough to demonstrate that their business was a

success. Ford looked around for capital and got it from a brewer. Luke Beard had arrived in Boston the same year as Ford and had built up the making of spruce and ginger beer to the point where his facilities had to be expanded. Ford's need for a new building corresponded with Beard's. Beard bought the land on Howard Street and commissioned Isaiah Rogers to draw plans for the new theatre, instructing him to reserve the basement for the bottling works. Rogers, a cousin of Tom Ford, had been hailed as the country's leading architect and had already built two theatres. While still a young man and wholly uninstructed, he won the competition for the Mobile, Alabama theatre; his second theatre was Boston's Tremont. Later he was to be the architect for the Astor Place Opera House in New York, the scene of the bloody Macready riot.

Rogers might have been tempted to pull the plans of the Tremont off the shelf and adapt them to the site and needs of his latest clients. But he was an architect of creative ability and insisted upon innovations in the new theatre.

An examination of the second Howard Athenaeum tells us much about the theatres in America a century ago. Its location, the circumstances of its erection, and its architect are evidence that it was typical of the first-class metropolitan theatres of the day. The same evidence emphasizes another important point: in design the Howard Athenaeum was definitely a product of the year 1846.

Rogers' Tremont Theatre, built in the same neighborhood and itself a typical metropolitan theatre, but of the year 1827, was notably different in design. Today the Tremont, if it were still standing, would seem antique and quaint, eloquent in its testimony to the era of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. The Howard Athenaeum, on the other hand, differs from our playhouses only superficially. Anna Cora Mowatt's *Fashion* was no more nor no less at home there than would be Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

In the period from 1827 to 1846 a change had taken place in American life, important enough to alter the appearance of its theatres. Except for the increasing popularity of opera and ballet, there was no great difference in the theatrical fare of the two theatres. The new design of the Howard Athenaeum came, therefore, not as the result of a demand for new forms of enter-

tainment but in response to new characteristics found outside the theatre in the thought and temper of society.

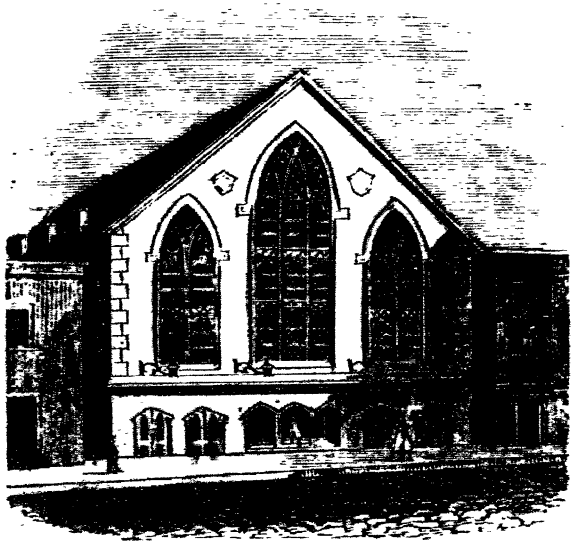
One of the more interesting paradoxes of Boston's history was the simultaneous presence in the theatre of the socially acceptable and the socially unacceptable. In 1794, when Charles Bulfinch built the Federal Street Theatre, Boston's first playhouse, he provided a separate entrance for the shady lady and her companions, admitting them to the third tier or gallery. Thereafter, it became customary to have individual entrances for the three galleries and also for the pit.

To the surprise and pleasure of its audiences, the Howard Athenaeum departed in two respects from the usual plan and equipment of a theatre. One innovation was the first appearance of spring-cushioned seats; the second was the elimination of the pit and third tier. Instead of the customary flat floor with its familiar accessories—benches, separate entrance, and bar—the Howard introduced the inclined parquet, or what we call today, the orchestra. The "fashionable entrance" to the first tier (the boxes) now admitted also to the parquet; and by sloping the floor and renaming the galleries, Rogers automatically did away with the third tier. The first tier, at about the level of the stage, was named the dress circle, and the second tier (also boxes) was called the first. The third tier, "the disreputable third," now became the second and respectable. And not a single seat had been sacrificed!

Two early descriptions of the Howard Athenaeum help us to picture it as it looked when it was Boston's best theatre. In 1850 the mayor, reporting on the safety of the city's places of amusement, spoke approvingly of the Howard's exits:

> This building has a granite front, and brick rear and side walls. The main entrance is from Howard Street, through three openings, each five feet in width, into a vestibule, from which the ascent to the boxes and parquette is by circular stairways. . . . The first tier of boxes will seat two hundred and eighty-one persons; the parquette, three hundred and sixteen; second tier of boxes, four hundred and eighteen; gallery six hundred, and by hard pushing, eight hundred can be crowded into it. The building filled to its utmost capacity will hold two thousand. A crowded audience leaves the building, all going out through the main entrance, in front, in about fifteen minutes.[3]

[3] Boston *Daily Mail*, October 21, 1850.

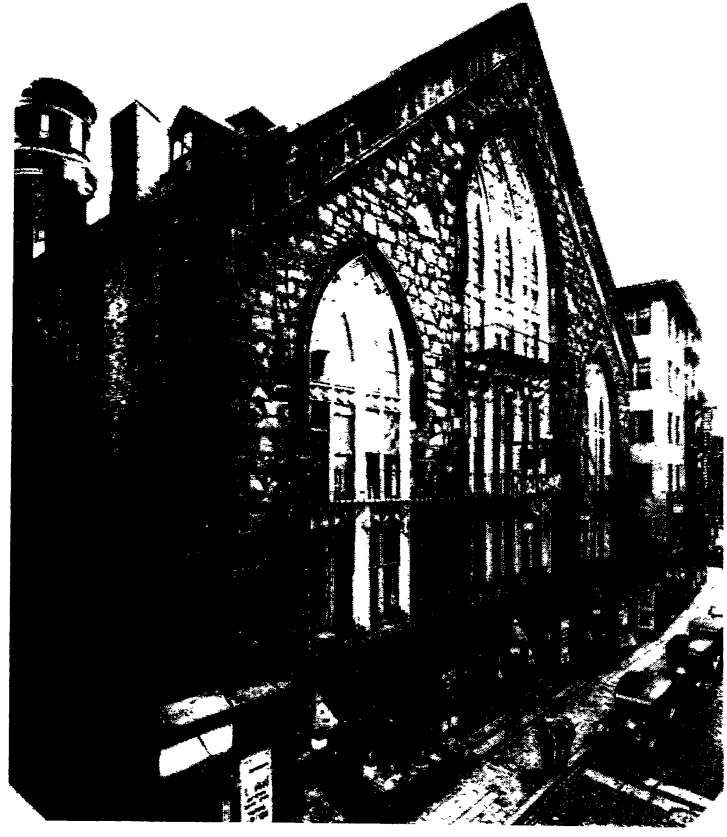


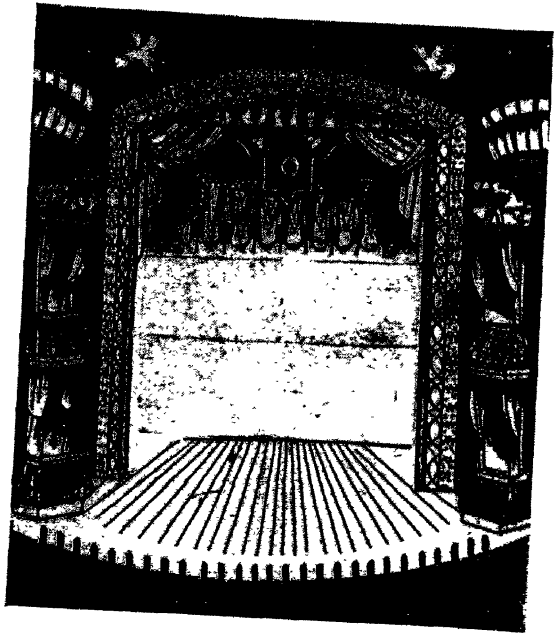
ATHENÆUM THEATRE

Erected on Howard Street, 1846

PRINT OF THE OLD HOWARD, 1846.

Right: PHOTOGRAPH OF OLD HOWARD, *circa* 1913. The original granite front, pierced by three Gothic windows, still remains, although painted glass has replaced the stained glass and the shields are missing from the two concavities flanking the central window.





OLD HOWARD STAGE IN 1884

From a theatre program of that year. Note the four stage boxes constructed during the remodeling of 1883.



OLD HOWARD STAGE IN 1950

From a photograph by Will Rapport, courtesy of the Old Howard management. Note that because of the shortening of the apron the front boxes are no longer on stage.

How many of our present theatres holding from eighteen hundred to two thousand persons can be emptied in fifteen minutes?

The other description, long, detailed, and enthusiastic, appeared in a Boston newspaper the morning of the opening. I quote only part of it:

> The interior is fitted up in a plain and simple style, yet all is chaste and elegant. . . . The front of the boxes are [*sic*] decorated with fresco panels of a neat and chaste character conforming with the general character of the interior. . . . The stage is forty-three feet deep and the opening of the proscenium and the drop curtain, thirty-six feet and thirty-two feet high. In the center of the ceiling is a beautiful figure, representing the genius of music, ascending from the earth with flowers—dropping her harp on the clouds as she ascends . . . painted by the famous Italian artist, Signor Angelo Monte Lilla.[4]

I have been unable to learn the reason for Signor Lilla's fame. After painting a portrait of James Hackett as Falstaff on the greenroom ceiling, it seems he disappeared into the limbo from which he had come, and into which later the portrait was also to vanish.

The Howard Athenaeum's opening bill, on October 5, 1846, echoed the première in the Tabernacle almost a year earlier, Sheridan's *Rivals* replacing his *School for Scandal.* Admission was half a dollar to the parquet, dress circle, and first gallery, and twenty-five cents to the second gallery. The curtain rose at seven o'clock. After "the splendid overture to La Muette de Portici," George Vandenhoff delivered a poetical address. "It was written by a clergyman, and was a lamentable specimen of clerical versification."[5]

This lame address was prophetic of a decline in Thomas Ford's good fortune. After the enormously successful appearance of the dancing Viennoise children in January and February, James Hackett, manager and star of the company, departed with a good portion of the proceeds. As Ford himself quaintly put it:

> . . . like the little birds we read of in the books, the little "Viennoise Children" came with berries, which not only preserved the management from general debility, but put them fairly upon their "pins" again. All now seemed merry as marriage-bells; things *looked* luminous, and so they were; but the "Baron" [Hackett was an Irish baron] was far too old a stager to be caught with his shutters up, when daylight was dawn-

[4] Boston *Evening Transcript,* October 5, 1846.

[5] George Vandenhoff, *The Green Room and Stage* (New York 1860), p. 190.

ing; ergo, he did put [by] much of the goodly coin coming in from the "draw" of the "Viennoise Children," and one morning, quite early, (early enough at least for the first mail line), he . . . *stepped out!*[6]

Hackett's actors for the most part were those who had recently been burned out of Niblo's Garden in New York. Their presence at the Howard Athenaeum smacked of opportunism. They treated it merely as a base of operations and continued to play in New York, traveling back and forth. Far from feeling any loyalty to the Howard, they used it as a stopgap until a new theatre was ready for them in New York. When Hackett walked out, so did they.

Despite these misfortunes, the first season was perhaps the best in the Howard Athenaeum's history. In forty-one weeks it had offered eight weeks of drama, one week of the violinist Sivori, six weeks each of Italian opera and the Sands-Lent Circus, four weeks of the Ravels in pantomime, and sixteen weeks of ballet. Vandenhoff, J. B. Booth, Mrs. Mowatt, Davenport, and Hackett had been the acting stars, although no play other than the little one-act afterpieces had achieved as many as three performances.

The next season was Ford's last. After five weeks of plays with Booth, Anderson, and Mrs. Mowatt, the rest of the lengthy season, which began in August and ran to the end of June 1848, was given over to opera and ballet, and to variety provided by aerialist Risley and his sons, Signor Barozzi's Living Pictures, the Heron family, the Bedouin Arabs, Madame Groux's Model Artists, and the Shakers. In one week all four of the last named companies appeared together. It was then that Ford decided he had had enough. Soon after the beginning of the 1848-1849 season, he leased the theatre to comedians Burton and Brougham, mounted the horse presented to him by the manager of the Sands-Lent Circus, and rode out of town, thus bringing to a close the first phase of the theatre's colorful life.

Although the exterior of the Howard Athenaeum has undergone only superficial changes, the interior has been remodeled or renovated a number of times during the past seventy years. In 1883 the auditorium was enlarged and the stage rebuilt, a new proscenium arch and fireproof drop curtain replaced the old

[6] [Thomas Ford] *A Peep Behind the Curtain* by a Boston Supernumerary (Boston 1850), p. 24.

ones, and at either side of the stage were constructed two "elaborately upholstered" stage boxes. In 1895 electric light was installed, and in the orchestra and dress circle the famous spring-cushioned chairs were removed and iron chairs "of handsome design" were substituted.

The Howard Athenaeum, known affectionately since 1870 as the Old Howard to all Bostonians, stands today as a monument to the American theatre of a century ago. Moreover, it is the lone survivor of its kind in Boston, one of the few remaining theatres of its day in the country, and it enjoys the unique distinction of having remained open and active throughout its entire life of one hundred and four years.

The theatre is as American as Luke Beard and his ginger beer, as much a part of Boston as James Otis, Paul Revere, Samuel Adams, and Cotton Mather, whose names and haunts surround it. But the other historic landmarks, though older, are of the past alone while the Howard Athenaeum is always of the present. Only a twentieth-century William Miller would have the temerity to predict the day on which the Old Howard will close its doors.